YOUTH'S PATHFINDER

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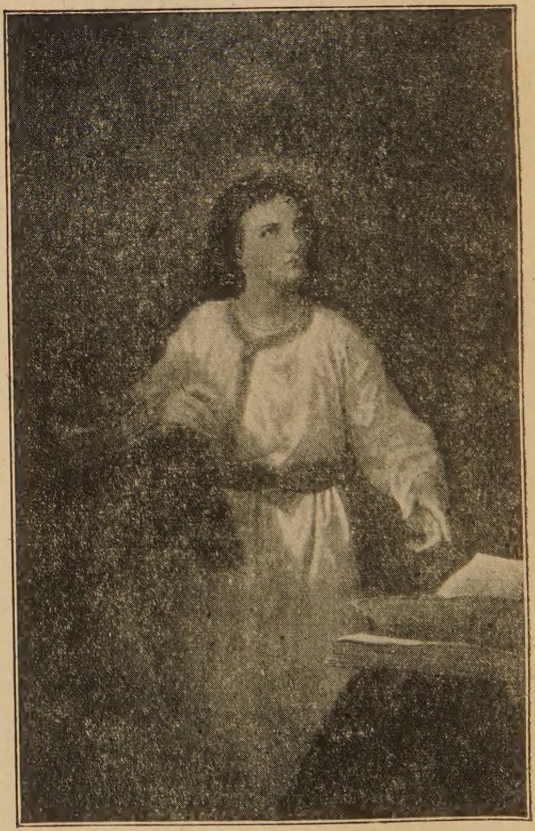

JESUS, THE DIVINE PATHFINDER.

"I am the way, and the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me" (John, 14, 6). "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Apoc., I 8)

YOUTH'S PATHFINDER

Heart to Heart Chats with Catholic Young Men and Women

by

REV. FULGENCE MEYER, O.F.M.,
Missionary

Author of

UNI UNA—To the One God My One Soul
PLAIN TALKS ON MARRIAGE
JESUS AND HIS PETS
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To the millions of excellent Catholic young men and young women of America who, in their innocence or penitence, look upon Jesus, the Divine Youth, as their model, their inspiration, and their virtue from on high, in order to rise to great, heavenly, and godlike goodness themselves: this book is admiringly and lovingly dedicated by

The Author.

Foreword

THIS book is a sincere effort towards answering the eager, wistful and anxious query of many of our Catholic young people of both sexes, who ask pleadingly as the youth Saul asked before the gates of Damascus: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts, 9, 6.)

They ask this question frequently and variously. They ask it regarding their conduct towards God, towards their parents, and towards themselves. They ask it with reference to personal purity and virtue as well as to their choice and pursuit of a vocation in life. They ask it respecting their behavior on the way to the convent, in a life of virginity in the world, and in love and courtship on the road to marriage.

If they read this book attentively, with an open mind and a receptive heart, the author flatters himself that in some degree at least will be verified anent its pages our Savior's answer to Saul: "There it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts, 9, 7).

THE AUTHOR.

On the feast of our
Lady's birthday,
1927.

CHAPTER I.

Youth

"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not" (*Eccl.*, 12, 1).

"I AM young but once: hence I will make the most of it." No proposition is more obvious than the one expressed in the first part of this sentence; and no resolution can be more warranted than the one contained in the second part. But there is a great divergence of opinion and practice regarding the manner of making the most of one's youth.

The World's Recipe

There are those who say: "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and ointments: and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered: let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go

without his part in luxury: let us everywhere leave tokens of joy: for this is our portion, and this our lot" (Wisd., 2, 6-10).

Invariably, however, the same persons are soon forced to confess ruefully: "We fools have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. Being born we forthwith ceased to be: and have been able to show no mark of virtue: but are consumed in our wickedness" (ib., 5, passim).

God's Recipe

The inspired writer, on the other hand, gives this recipe for the wise exploitation of youth: "Rejoice, therefore, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be in that which is good in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thy eyes: and know that for all these God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccl., 11, 9).

If there is a period of life which particularly lends itself to happiness, optimism, and joy, it is the season of youth. But as there is, according to the common saying, but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, so there

seems to be, too, but one step from the highest joviality to the deepest gloom; from the finest optimism to the crassest pessimism; from the keenest desire to live forever to the haunting bent towards self-destruction.

An Epidemic of Suicides

Just now we appear to be having in our country an epidemic of suicides among young people of both sexes, of various classes and professions. It is an indication that not only they, but also many others like them, were and are very unhappy. And why should young people, in the most exhilarating and promising time of life, be such utter strangers to happiness? God plainly gives the answer in these words of the Bible: "My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer., 2, 13). In other words, these unfortunate young people have forgotten their Creator in the days of their youth.

The only way for young persons to be wholesomely, substantially and lastingly happy, is to reverse this process, and to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Then, whatever may befall them, their happiness will not suffer from it, grounded as it is upon God, Who is always the same in His love, goodness

and bounty. The days of affliction will come upon them also sooner or later, and the years will draw nigh of which they will say: They please me not. Yet they will be fortified against them in such a manner that the peace of their mind will not be diminished, and the joy of their heart will not be dampened. Here we may paraphrase the words of St. Paul (Rom., 1, 17), and say: "The young person liveth by faith." Faith in God will enable him or her to meet every difficulty victoriously, and to endure every test triumphantly.

The One Expert on Happiness

God is the only expert on human happiness and the manner of its acquisition. He made the human heart and gave it its irresistible craving for happiness. He alone knows how this craving can be satisfied. From the method He has established there is no escape, if one is going to achieve happiness at all. The one and exclusive way, therefore, for a young person to be happy is to follow God's own prescription and remember the Creator in the days of youth.

Moreover, God wants what He wants. And He is not indefinite in telling what He wants. "My son," He says, "honor the Lord with thy substance, and give Him of the first of all thy fruits" (Prov., 3, 9). If God wants the first fruits in other lines, He especially wants the

first fruits of human life, namely the days of youth. He will allow no one to defraud Him of these with impunity. Whoever attempts it, pays dearly for it by the emptiness, anguish and misery of his life.

Solomon in His Youth

Perhaps no man in the history of mankind had greater opportunities to seek happiness in his youth, and no one sought happiness with more avidity and intensity in the things of this world, than Solomon, the king of Jerusalem. He relates of himself: "I said in my heart: I will go, and abound with delights, and enjoy good things. . . . I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem. . . . And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not: and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared: and... I saw in all things vanity, and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun" (Eccl., 2, 1 sqq.). And after all his experiences this wisest of men ends by exhorting: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man" (Eccl., 12, 13).

St. Augustine, one of the leading Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and one of the greatest thinkers of all times, is another striking witness to the inability of things created to give to the

human heart the contentment it craves, and to the soul of man the happiness it wants. As a young man, before his conversion to the faith, he had tried for over fifteen years to sate his hunger for joy and peace in the amusements of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, in which he indulged without restraint. Far from rendering him happy, however, these worldly diversions and fleshly gratifications merely made him more miserable from day to day until under the impulse of grace he turned to God, in Whom he finally found all he was looking and yearning for. And in the warmest gratitude and most blissful love he cried out: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord; and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee!"

Sacred and secular history of ancient and modern times are replete with instances of men and women in mature life deploring the follies and sins of their youth. You find no instance, however, of an elderly man or woman ruing the fact, that they spent their young years in virtue and goodness.

"What Things a Man Shall Sow, Those Also Shall He Reap"

But why does the Bible lay stress on remembering the Creator in the *days of youth?* Must we not remember Him as well in middle age and in old age? Indeed, we must remember

our Creator at all times, for one age can as little afford to do without Him as another. Yet emphasis is laid on youth for the obvious reason, that if God is remembered in youth He will likely be remembered throughout life; whereas if He is forgotten in youth, He will probably be forgotten forever, according to the words of the Bible: "The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in old age?" (Ecclus., 25, 5).

In a way, youth is the most important period of life. On its arrangement and development the entire subsequent life of man or woman depends. Middle age and old age, as a rule, take their tone, color, value and power from the youth that precedes them: hence the importance and necessity of spending youth in such a manner that it will serve to inaugurate the later life as one desires it to be. "It is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth" (Lament., 3, 27). "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov., 22, 6).

Youth is the springtime of life. The human mind and heart and nervous system follow certain psychological laws as infallibly and inexorably as the soil of the earth complies with the laws of agriculture. In other words, given causes always have given effects. You reap what you sow. If you sow much and cultivate

the respective soil thoroughly, you will have an abundant and gratifying harvest. If you sow little or nothing, and if you pay no attention to proper cultivation, you will have a poor and pitiful crop, or none at all. The good, indifferent or bad nature of the crop will depend greatly on the nature of the seed you sow in spring. You would shrug your shoulders in ridicule and pity at the farmer who, in all seriousness, would expect to reap pure grain in the harvest time whilst he was sowing wild oats or rank weeds in the spring. He would not be more fatuous than the young man or woman who sows the tares and thistles of sin and vice in youth and expects to reap the flowers and fruits of grace and virtue in manhood or womanhood.

The Healthy Dream of Youth

You are looking forward to the day when, as a mature man or woman, you will enjoy a genuine and solid reputation for character, goodness and integrity; when you will be looked up to with respect and a degree of envy for your sterling personality; when you will challenge admiration on all sides, and serve as an inspiration to young and old. There is only one way of turning this very healthy and normal dream of youth into a reality by and by: and this is by thoroughly and steadfastly

practicing in youth those virtues for which you aim to get credit in your advancing years. Whatever you do not acquire when you are young you will yearn for in vain when you are old. Since they were written over two thousand years ago, the experience of every generation has added force and emphasis to the words of the Bible: "The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?"

Even the heathens of old, from a natural sense and knowledge of cause and effect, recognized and emphasized this truth. They had the mythological Hercules come to the parting of the ways when he was still a very young man. One road, the primrose path of pleasure and self-indulgence, looked very inviting, but its end was destruction and oblivion: the other road, rugged, stony and thorny, the path of duty and honor, led to glory and immortality. He chose the latter. He could not choose both roads. He had to make up his mind for the one or the other. And he had to decide when he was still very young. Human nature is the same now as it was when the fable of Hercules was invented to bring home to young people the importance of youth, and to stress the fact, that in adolescence they were really choosing and fixing the nature and fortune of their riper years and old age.

Youth, the Dynamo of Life

When men or women, in mature life, achieve greatness and distinction in a certain field of endeavor, they are complimented and applauded. They really earned this applause, however, years previously, in their youth, when they planted the germs or laid the foundations of the greatness that comes to light. Even as the power of a wonderful electrical display, which arrests the admiration of an entire city, is generated by a dynamo and stored away in a battery far from the scene of the marvelous exhibition, so the secret of eminence in the various phases of human activities is usually far removed, in its incipiency and development, from its actual manifestation.

More than once St. Paul compares this life to a race, and also to a fight. He says: "I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air" (1 Cor., 9, 26). And again he declares: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. . . . As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice" (2 Tim., 4, 7, 8). If in a race a young man would have the misfortune to fall and sprain an ankle or break a limb no sooner he started to run, he would have little chance to win the prize. Or if in a fight he would wrench his wrist or dislocate an arm in the first encounter

with his opponent, he would have little hope of being declared the victor. Similarly the young person who fails seriously against morality or faith in youth, the very beginning of life, has little chance to win a crown in the end.

Preparation for a Wedding

Our Lord compares this life to a preparation for a wedding with the Lamb of God, the immortal Spouse of our souls, when He says: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom" (Matt., 25, 1). Let us suppose a girl was to be married. She had made elaborate preparations for the ceremony and expended infinite pains on her trousseau. The day of the wedding dawned beautiful, promising and inspiring. The girl was dressed as a fairy queen, and in her pretty and immaculate garb she appeared as the very acme of youthful sweetness and loveliness. But just as she was to be helped into the bridal car she had the misfortune to slip and to fall into the mud of the street. Her dress was thoroughly covered and saturated with dirt. Would not this untoward event spoil the joy of the entire day for the discomfited bride? Would not the thought of her ruined wedding gown inject an unpleasant and disturbing element in all the gladness the day contained? Yet the wedding

attire is after all but a very secondary thing in the value and meaning of the day. The case is infinitely worse when a girl or, for that matter a boy, too, ruin the happiness of their short day of life by sullying their soul with ugly sin and vice at the very beginning of the day, in youth and adolescence.

Beautiful, but Dangerous

Youth is at the same time the most beautiful and the most dangerous period of life; it can be the most blessed, or the most fatal of seasons. It is the time of poetry and romance, of dreams and visions, of aspirations and ambitions, of the noblest impulses and the grandest resolves. But it is also the season of inexperience and immaturity, of impulsiveness and impetuosity, of overweeningness and conceit, of hasty ideas, undigested plans and precipitate action. If in youth the traits of virtue and character are more promising, the germs of vice and evil-mindedness are more deadly. By one heroic decision a young person can lay the foundations of future greatness; and by one misstep a youth can start headlong and irresistibly to utter and irretrievable ruin.

Some time ago, when I was sojourning in New Mexico, there was a terrible wreck on the railroad near the city in which I was staying. A long transcontinental train, drawn by two

engines, took a curve too rapidly, it seems, and was derailed and partly demolished. One of the engineers, who was killed, was said to have been running trains for thirty years without a single accident. But one accident was enough, for he never ran another train thereafter. The reflection was sad. It would have been sadder still, if the accident had happened to him on his first run. In life this terrible supposition is, alas, but too frequently verified in a moral and, consequently, in an immensely more disastrous way. Many a young person, just starting out on the course of life, through too much speed of living, or through a neglect of the wholesome warning signs against spiritual danger, suffers a complete wreck of innocence, virtue, character and faith, the value of which is immeasurably greater than that of life itself.

On the Stage of Life

This life is often likened to a stage, upon which each one has a role to play. The role is little in the point of time, for its playing covers but a brief period; but it is very big in the point of its significance and momentous consequences. If you were the leading man or lady in a play of three acts to be given by the dramatic club of your parish, and in the very first act you would fail completely: you would forget your lines, be awkward and clumsy, stumble all over

yourself and mess things up altogether: would this misadventure not threaten to spoil the whole play for you? You might do much better in the two subsequent acts, but it would go hard to redeem yourself entirely, for the audience would likely always hold your incipient failure against you, saying: "It is a pity he or she got so bad and damaging a start." Parish dramas come and go. Today people are interested; tomorrow they forget. Not so with reference to the drama of life. The young man or lady who through mean sin and vice ruin the beginning of their life's play will hardly ever condone, or find others to condone, their folly, even if the deleterious results of it have been healed and redressed. Hence the necessity of starting life's drama correctly and effectively. Success in the first act of it will be a harbinger and an earnest for greater and more startling and gratifying success in the acts that are to follow.

Training for the Stage

A novice on the stage, who is to enter upon the discharge of an important role, welcomes valuable hints, suggestions and cautions with reference to his playing. He prefers to be advised and warned before the play begins rather than after it is over. It is my privilege, dear young reader, to attempt to offer you helpful

instruction and timely encouragement towards the proper and successful discharge of the part assigned to you on the stage of life, or of your vocational duties as a Catholic young man or woman. My aim is not to find fault with, scold, reprimand and discourage you, but rather to advise, enlighten, guide and encourage you. If I shall advert to any more or less serious faults of youth, it will be only with an eye towards their timely correction and elimination. I take it for granted that you would not be reading this book, were you not possessed of a virtuous mind and of a decided leaning to start your life aright, and to fashion it from the very beginning into a thing of beauty and a source of substantial happiness for yourself and others. Every normal young person has a strong desire, that will not down, to do something big and to amount to something worth while in life. Nature would not implant this great and vehement desire in every heart, unless its fulfilment in ordinary circumstances were possible. It is, then, within the usual range of every young person to attain genuine greatness, and to live a life of substance and value before God and men. The one and only way of achieving this is to follow the inspired advice of Solomon, mentioned above: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man."

Why Was Jesus Young?

It is very significant that our Lord, becoming the second Adam through the incarnation, and aiming to resemble the first Adam in many things, deviated much from him in this that He passed through infancy, childhood and youth to attain manhood, whereas the first Adam never was a youth, but appeared at once as a full-grown man. Why, then, did our Lord deign to pass through youth?

The answer is evident. He did this to emphasize the importance of this period of life, and to show all young people by His own example how to spend their youth in a way that is pleasing to God and profitable to themselves, and how to make it serve as a preparatory stage to a full, godlike and happy life.

Our Catholic young people of either sex have many inspiring models proposed to them from among the saints of God, of ancient and modern times. There is no need of my enumerating them here, for they are well known. But infinitely the most inspiring model for every Catholic young man or woman in every condition and circumstance of life is *Jesus, the Model of Youth.* No one, as much as He, "advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men" (Luke, 2, 52). And from no one, so much as from Him, can any young person learn to do the same. The way to learn is to

have your eyes fixed on Jesus, the divine youth, day and night, and to ask yourself again and again: How would Jesus have acted in my place, or how would He bid me act, were He here now in person?

He Had Conquered the World at Thirty

Secular history records valiant deeds and splendid achievements of more or less young men of power and fame. Alexander the Great, at the age of thirty, had conquered practically all the known civilized world of his day. He is said to have looked longingly at the stars, weeping and sighing that there were no more worlds for him to conquer. When Julius Caesar, in his youth, saw a statue of Alexander the Great, he cried, saying: "When he was thirty, he had conquered the world. And I, what have I done?" Then he, too, started to conquer the then known world.

Yet, after all, how puny and vanishing, how stale and uninteresting are these and all the other famous conquerors of history over against Jesus Christ, the one conqueror of men! He conquered not through hate, but by love. He did not make others bleed: He bled Himself. His conquests are not ephemeral and reversible, but everlasting and final. He conquers not the bodies, but the souls of men. He not only is a great conqueror Himself, but He teaches

and trains everyone of His followers to be, in a way, a far greater conqueror than either Alexander or Caesar: for He teaches them to conquer themselves, saying: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt., 16, 24). As Caesar, then, had the image of Alexander, every Catholic young man and young lady should have the image of Jesus vividly and continuously before their minds and say: When He was thirty-three He conquered the whole world, not only the civilized, but also the uncivilized world; not by the sword, but by the Cross; not only for His own day, but for all times to come. In addition to the world He conquered heaven, not for Himself alone, but also for all His followers. And I, what am I doing in the manner of self-conquest and the conquest of heaven?

The Glamor of Eminence

To young men there is a glamor associated with greatness in athletics or aeronautics, with prominence in arts, mechanics, politics, commerce and literature, with distinction on the stage or the screen. To young ladies the same or other spheres of renown strongly appeal. Yet to but very few it is given to be conspicuous and illustrious as the champions in one or the other field. This really matters little; for,

as was said above, genuine, substantial and lasting greatness and fame are within the reach of every young man or woman. They are attained by virtue and purity of life, by disinterested service and devotion, by the love of God and the hatred of self. "He that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (John, 12, 15).

A pious and wealthy lady had in her drawing room a beautiful and artistic painting exhibiting two young men of history. One was Alexander the Great, holding the cosmos, or figure of the world, in his hand. The other was St. Aloysius, treading the world under foot. The one was conquered by the world he conquered. He fell a victim to his excesses early in life. The other conquered the world completely and gave it no power whatever over him. He merely used it as a stepping stone to heaven, the one conquest worth while. Who taught St. Aloysius the secret of his grand and immortal conquest? Jesus Christ, the One youthful conqueror of history, of Whom alone, in their entirety, will always be true the glorious words inscribed on the ancient and venerable obelisk standing in the middle of St. Peter's Square, before St. Peter's Church in Rome: "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat"—Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules.

The Permanent Present Tense

The present tense of these verbs is significant. Only to One Conqueror of history, to Jesus Christ, is the present tense of the words, indicative of conquest, permanently applicable. Other heroes have conquered: Jesus is now conquering. He never will be non-conquering. St. Paul declares this tersely, saying: "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today; and the same forever" (Hebr., 13, 8).

The Divine Pathfinder

To human life, especially, apply the words of the Apocalypse (1, 8): "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty." If you want Jesus Christ to be your end, or your reward after death, He must be your beginning in life: by inspiring, impregnating and sanctifying your youth. From your infancy and childhood He must be your all in all. In Him you must live, and move and be (Acts, 17, 28). If God has always insisted on the first fruits being consecrated to Him, He demands all the first conscious efforts of the human mind, the first movements of the human will, the first aspirations of the human heart. If you render God this service He will react generously and say to you by the blessings with which He will enrich your youth:

"Rejoice, therefore, O young man [woman], in thy youth. Fear not, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great" (Eccl., 11, 9; Gen., 15, 1).

As St. Aloysius, St. Anthony, St. Agnes, St. Teresa and countless others in the past, so there are innumerable Catholic young men and women today who say: "I am young but once: hence I will make the most of it. I am going to be young in such a manner that I shall always be glad and proud of it; so I can recall it with sincere pleasure and self-congratulation as long as I live. Having but one youth, I am going to give it to God Who has given it to me. He will be the object of my first love, the subject of my first dreams, and the goal of my first ambitions. No one can give joy to my youth (Ps. 42, 4) as He can; and no one will renew my youth (Ps. 102, 5) as He will. He then will have my one and only youth. "For Thou art my hope, O Lord, from my youth" (Ps. 70, 5).

CHAPTER II.

Duties Towards God, the Church, and the State

"Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man" (*Eccl.*, 12, 13).

THE fear a Catholic young man or woman has of God is not that of a slave who dreads punishment, but that of a child who shrinks from offending or hurting God. It is therefore not a disagreeable, oppressive and destructive sentiment, but a sweet, heartening and constructive disposition, which renders piety delicious and makes virtue appear more desirable. Young persons who are imbued with this fear of God keep in continual touch with Him through their daily prayers, in the morning, at night, and before and after meals. They would as little think of neglecting them, as they would resolve to omit bidding the time of day to their parents, or thanking them for their signal favors at their bestowal. If per-

chance, through some hurry or peculiar circumstance, they forget to say their ordinary prayers, they instinctively feel that something is wrong or missing: so ingrained is their habit of communing with God; it has become a second nature to them. They not only say their personal daily prayers, of which the examination of conscience and the consequent act of perfect contrition form an essential part, but they also cheerfully take part in the daily family prayer, and thereby give the parents a wholesome stimulus to maintain this most salutary institution of a thorough Catholic life and atmosphere in the home.

The Road-Signs to Earthly and Heavenly Bliss

Catholic young people who pray find no difficulty in observing conscientiously the commandments of God and the Church. They look upon these commandments as the surest and safest road-signs on their way to earthly happiness and heavenly bliss. As long as they follow them, and mind their timely cautions against moral dangers, they know they are on the right road and need entertain no fears regarding their future. They consider the Church as their God-given guide through life. And even as young Tobias of old, by closely following the counsels of his Heaven-sent guide,

the archangel Raphael, not only achieved spiritual and religious, but also material and worldly success and prosperity, so our young Catholics, by being loyal subjects of their Church, lay the foundations not only for personal holiness of life, but also for an enviable progress and eminence in temporal matters; and this in consequence not merely of the blessings of God in reward for goodness, but also of the solid traits of virtue and character begotten by the pursuit of moral and religious integrity. "My children, behold the generations of men, and know ye that no one had hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded" (Ecclus., 2, 11).

Adolescence and Piety

Adolescence, because of the physical phenomena incidental to it, is of all the periods of life the most favorable to a healthy growth of piety and religiousness. If these do not sprout and develop in youth, there is little hope of them appearing later on. Here especially the words of the Bible apply: "The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?" Catholic young persons, therefore, who have the fear of the Lord in their hearts, attend Holy Mass regularly and devoutly every Sunday and holyday of obligation, and abstain from unnecessary

servile work on these days; they keep the Fridays and other days of abstinence and fasting appointed by the Church, according to their condition and circumstances; they go to Holy Communion worthily at least once a month; and many go every week or even every day, if they have the opportunity.

Attachment to the Parish Church

They show their deep appreciation of the Catholic faith and their strong attachment to the Church by their allegiance and loyalty to their parish church. They are not hidden and secret, but open and public members of their parish church. They know their pastor and he knows them. They always bear in mind, that the duty of contributing towards the maintenance of the Church is as binding as is, for instance, the duty of Sunday Mass or the Friday abstinence, and they are equally conscientious in rendering it gladly and liberally. They are as generous with their ordinary and extraordinary contributions towards their parish church as their financial status allows.

They give until it hurts: that is, they cheerfully deny themselves certain pleasures or luxuries in order to be of greater assistance to their church. They rather feel happy than otherwise in their giving. Their only regret is not to be able to give more. No purpose seems

worthier of their support than the cause of their holy faith, at home and abroad. Hence they are not oblivious of the needs of the Catholic Church at large; but whenever a request of money or personal service is made to them for pious or charitable purposes in the diocese or elsewhere in the country, or for the domestic or foreign missions, especially for the support of the Holy Father in Rome, they are always ready to give, and they are magnanimous in the giving.

The Stock-Market of God

They thus make the best possible investment of their money. In spiritual and even in material values it will bring them rich and sumptuous returns. In their wisdom and piety they form a noble contrast to the, alas, not infrequent Catholic young men and women who, in regard to supporting the Church, forget that they have developed into wage-earners, and are by that very fact personally bound to contribute towards the Church's maintenance in proportion to their earnings, instead of relying on their parents to attend to this matter, as though they themselves were still immature and dependent children. As well might a child that attains the use of reason, and is consequently bound to observe the Friday law, expect its parents to abstain from meat in its

stead or vicariously for it. The law affects it personally; but hardly more personally than the law of supporting the Church affects every young person that earns and freely disposes of money.

Religious and Social Feasts

Pious Catholic young persons take a lively interest in the religious and social affairs of their parish, and do what they can to make them as successful and productive of good as possible. They belong to the respective parish societies and sodalities, accept the offices tendered them, and acquit themselves of their charges as best they can, with unselfish interest, unstinted alacrity and unfeigned enthusiasm. They are particularly regular in their attendance at the monthly general Communion of their society, knowing that no factor operates more potently towards a sturdy Catholicity than that of crowd or mass psychology. In unity there is strength. It will be excusable partiality, if I recommend in an especial manner the Holy Name Society and its monthly Communion, corporately, to the young men and, similarly, the Altar Society and its regular Communion to the young women who read these pages.

They who are requested to lend their services in the capacity of choir members, ushers,

wardens, or in similar positions on behalf of the church will always bear in mind, that directly or indirectly they are asked to cooperate towards the advancement of God's glory and the salvation of immortal souls, and they will appraise and welcome the offer accordingly. When everybody is busy and eager to promote the cause of Christ on earth, they feel they must not stand back idle, but contribute their help, too, in the interest of righteousness and godliness. They say, so to speak, with Urias of the Old Testament: "The ark of God and Israel and Juda dwell in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord abide on the face of the earth: and shall I go into my house, to eat and to drink . . . ? By thy welfare and by the welfare of thy soul I will not do this thing" (2 Kings, 11, 11).

The Virtue of Good Reading

Few things have so powerful a determining effect upon a person's subsequent life as the taste for and the habit of reading acquired in youth. Hence the necessity of conceiving a love for good reading, and of nursing the practice of it in the earliest years. Catholic young people are very fortunate, if they relish the reading of not only good, but of the best books, papers and magazines within their reach. Certain books of the Bible, notably the New

Testament, a good copy of the Lives of the Saints, well-written biographies of eminent Catholic men and women, young and old, clear and clever explanations of the doctrines and practices of the Church, together with a history of the Church in general, or of its fortunes in our country in particular, and similar books, can get to be not only very instructive, but also most entertaining and delightful reading for a Catholic young man or woman who adopts it sincerely and pursues it judiciously. The same is true of the perusal of good Catholic periodicals and of the diocesan Catholic weekly with its religious news of a local, diocesan, metropolitan and universal nature. There ought to be more zest experienced and deeper pleasure derived by a Catholic youth from the knowledge of the current events of His Church in his locality and the world over, than from the knowledge of the particular standing of a baseball club, for instance, or the latest decrees of fashion.

Life's Marathon

The race of life has always been to the swift and strong. Nowadays, while this is as true as ever, it would seem as though the race were swifter than it has ever been. Maybe it only seems so. At any rate competition is very keen, the struggle for existence is severely close,

and the survival of the fittest is a cruelly stubborn fact in public and economic life. In view of this our Catholic young people must be at pains to equip themselves as well as possible for their part in this race and struggle, in order to make a good bid for ultimate survival. They do this by acquiring whatever solid education they can procure. They will aim to get this education as much as possible from Catholic schools as long as their personal condition permits it. They would make a disastrous mistake if, for mere material, social or political success, they would jeopardize the priceless boon of their holy faith by frequenting schools in which, considering their temperament and other circumstances, their spirit of faith would necessarily be weakened, and the love for their Church could not but gradually grow cold. It is needless to insist in this place that, even in the secular branches of knowledge, our Catholic schools, high schools, colleges, and universities easily equal and very often surpass other schools in the efficiency, thoroughness and practical value of the education they impart.

Our Country

The Catholic who is a dutiful member of his Church is invariably also a loyal citizen of his country. The United States is admittedly a wonderful country to live in, but the great

benefits it bestows upon its inhabitants engender in them corresponding obligations of a high order. True citizens, both men and women, not only appreciate the value of good and honest government, but also contribute their share to make and keep the government good and honest. They do this by taking a lively interest in the administration of the affairs of their country, and by the conscientious and judicious use of the ballot. For those who are old enough to vote suffrage is not only a right but also a duty.

For Catholics in this country, since certain bigots aim to deprive us of our constitutional rights, as is instanced for example in the fanatic opposition to the parish schools, the use of the ballot is doubly obligatory. It is our main weapon of defense. If we use it consistently and wisely, we shall never be deprived of the hallowed rights guaranteed us by the organic law of the land. Whereas if we are over-confident or inattentive to our rights and the attacks made upon them by unscrupulous and un-American bigots, we have but ourselves to blame if we are despoiled of the constitutional privileges of American citizenship. Our Catholic young men and women, therefore, should contract the habit of voting at every important election from their very maturity in political life. A healthy interest in the country's wel-

fare, outside of the benefits just referred to, also lends a certain zest to life that is stimulating and gratifying to a good man or woman.

Give Caesar His Due

It is hardly necessary to add, that Catholics must not let anyone surpass them in the faithful observance of the laws of the country and in the just payment of taxes. Here, too, we can apply the words of Jesus: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more" (Luke, 12, 48). "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's" (Matt., 22, 21).

Of this rule of life Jesus Himself gave the best exhibition to young people. How much He was intent on giving to God what is God's He demonstrated when He was a boy of twelve years. He remained in the temple for three days, hearing the doctors of the law and asking them questions. When He was asked by His Mother why He had tarried there, He replied significantly: "Did you not know, that I must be about My Father's business?" His Father's business came first and engaged Him above all. Alas, our good Catholic mothers and fathers have not to ask their sons and daughters, as a rule, why they are so engrossed with the things

of God; they rather have to ask them frequently, why they do not attend more to their religious duties and the honor they owe to God.

Although Jesus, being God, was not bound to pay taxes to the government, since the whole world belonged to Him, yet, for the sake of setting His disciples an example, He wrought a miracle to pay a personal tax on a certain occasion. He said to Peter: "Go to the sea, and cast in a hook: and that fish which shall first come up, take: and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater: take that, and give it to them for Me and thee" (Matt., 17, 26).

Catholics will always be model citizens if they imitate our Lord and mind the teaching of His great Apostle St. Paul, who exhorted the first Christians with reference to their heathen rulers, saying: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God... Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake . . . Render therefore to all men their dues. Tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honor, to whom honor . . . Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom., 13, passim).

CHAPTER III.

Duties Towards Parents

"He that honoreth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoreth his father shall enjoy a long life" (*Ecclus.*, 3, 5, 7).

AFTER God no one has done or does so much for a child as its parents. To them it owes the greatest boon it has: the gift of existence. It does not require much reflection to become aware, that existence is the root and spring of every good we possess. Friendship, love, happiness, success and fame can not even be conceived without it. We are glad of and thankful for many things. The one thing we must rejoice over and thank for most is the fact of our existence. And since God used our parents to confer upon us this priceless gift, and since without this particular man and woman, who are our parents, we should never have existed at all, there is nothing more natural than that for this favor alone, and were it the only one we received from them, we entertain for them the liveliest feelings of love, respect and gratitude as long as we live.

The Inerasable Claim to Honor

No matter what else parents may or may not be or do to their child, and however recreant they may be to their parental duties, and personally unworthy of respect and honor: the mere fact, that they were the agents God employed to give existence to the child, so that without these particular parents the child would have never been, must outweigh far and away every consideration of a personal nature that is unfavorable to them, or threatens to militate against the love, reverence and recognition their dignity as parents demands. As the parents of the child, exclusive of every other title, they are the representatives of God, Who used them as His cooperators in the creation of the child, and for this reason alone the child is beholden to look upon them and treat them with sentiments of love and homage akin to those which it harbors for God Himself, knowing the while that whatever reverence it exhibits to the parents redounds upon God's own person.

Amid Thunder and Lightning

Of its plain and sacred duty in this important matter God has left no child in doubt. Besides implanting the instinct of its rendition into the breast of every child, clearly, unmistakably and ineradicably, God manifested His will in this regard most solemnly and impressively

when He published the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai amid the accompaniments of thunder and lightning, indicative of His majesty, holiness and justice, which were the sponsors and guarantors of the commands He was promulgating. He inscribed the commandments on two tables of stone. On the first table were written the three commandments referring to the love and adoration that were due to Him, the sovereign Lord and Creator. On the second table He noted the commandments that referred to the obligations that men and women had with regard to themselves and their fellow beings. The first and foremost of these, the one at the very head of the table, is the emphatic charge of God: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be longlived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee" (Ex., 20, 12).

Why the Distinction?

The first question that rises in our minds in connection with this command is: Why does God in the decalogue inculcate so solemnly the duties of children to their parents, whilst He makes no express mention whatsoever of the duties of parents to their children? Are not the latter as sacred and as binding as the former? They no doubt are. But a plausible answer seems to be given by daily experience.

Parents as a rule rather abound than lack in the love they entertain for and tender their children. Their natural parental instinct seems to be a sufficient law unto them. They appear not to need a particular reminder and a solemn challenge to do what they usually find their greatest delight in doing. Not so, however, are the children. They easily forget and often seriously neglect their most natural, sacred and obvious duties of filial love, veneration and thankfulness. Hence the solemn insistence of the decalogue holding children to their obligations.

At the Head of the List

The next question is, why is the command to honor parents the first and most prominent of all the commandments of the second table? Above all, because parents, being God's own representatives, deserve consideration and recognition beyond all others. The duty to honor them is moreover the deepest rooted in nature, and therefore the most binding and consequential precept. The family is the social unit, the foundation and bulwark of all civilized and well organized society. Family life is inconceivable without the proper acceptance of parental authority on the part of the children. Furthermore, once this commandment is duly observed, the fulfilment of all the subsequent

commandments follows naturally as a matter of course. Men of all times have gaged the character of children by their attitude towards their parents, being convinced that this attitude infallibly discloses the virtue, honor and nobility which sons and daughters either possess or lack. We still maintain this standard of character appraisal today. There never will be a better one as long as human nature is what it is.

"Honor" Implies Everything

A further question is, why does the fourth commandment only use the word "honor", without making mention of the duty to love and obey parents? Because honor, when sincerely and thoroughly tendered, implies love and obedience of a high order. There are children who really love their parents yet who thoughtlessly withhold from them the honor that is due them. There are those, too, who obey their parents, and yet neglect to honor them as they should. Whereas the child who exhibits genuine honor to its parents, thereby demonstrates its abiding love and entire submission to them.

Another question is, why is the fourth the only one of the ten commandments for the observance of which is promised also an earthly reward? Again because of its supreme impor-

tance, and to stimulate its due fulfilment. Then, too, its very keeping involves and produces terrestrial happiness. The consciousness of being right with father and mother, and of paying them the tribute of love and reverence that is their due, is in itself one of the sweetest feelings the human breast experiences. Besides, the good feelings begotten by the sweet relations of attachment and good-will between parents and children make for mental and corporal comfort and happiness in the home and elsewhere, and thereby strongly act in favor of a blissful longevity.

The Secret of Life's Success

The qualities that concur in disposing a child to honor, obey and love its parents, are good sense, self-control, self-discipline, regularity, system, order, moderation and disinterested devotion to duty. These are the same traits that spell success and happiness in life in general. In addition to God's special blessing they bring about the fulfilment of the words of the Bible: "He that honoreth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children" (Ecclus., 3, 5, 6). This last remark is noteworthy. It tells that the reward of good children will be after the manner of their virtue. For being good and loving to their parents, their

own children, once they themselves are parents, will be good and loving to them. To obtain this boon, no sacrifice is too great.

When God Curses

The earthly blessing which God promises to dutiful children is converted into a proportionate curse, however, for those children who ignore, disregard and ruthlessly transgress the fourth commandment, and refuse to honor, love and obey their parents. For their hostile attitude to His representatives God will pursue these unnatural children with His wrath, which will overtake them sooner or later, even in this life. Usually God's punishment is after the manner of the transgression, and when these ingrate children once become parents themselves, provided God vouchsafes parenthood to them, their filial ingratitude will be avenged by the coldness and heartlessness of their own children towards them. God will not be mocked. The inimical position unloving children take to their parents of itself renders their life unpleasant and miserable, and creates a spirit of mutual aversion, distrust and antagonism that depresses the soul, gnaws at the heart, impairs the health, and consequently embitters and shortens the days of life. There's no escaping the inspired words: "He is cursed of God that angereth his mother" (Ecclus.,3, 18). "He

that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy" (Prov., 19, 26).

The Depth and Width and Length of God's Curse

The Bible, which is the word of God Himself, gives a number of striking examples to illustrate, as by means of eloquent object lessons, the terrible and far-reaching curse of God that pursues the delinquent son or daughter and, respectively, the great blessings that are heaped upon the dutiful and obsequious child.

Shortly after the human race got its second start, as it were, when the waters of the deluge had receded, and after God had blessed Noe and his sons profusely, the patriarch one day fell a victim to drunkenness. When he was in this condition his son Cham used the occasion to dishonor and ridicule his father, whilst the two other sons treated him with touching reverence and thoughtful regard. Awaking from the wine, and learning what had occurred, Noe cursed Chanaan, the son of Cham, whilst he blessed Sem and Japheth. And both his curse and his blessing were ratified by God, and affected not only the addressees but also their descendants from generation to generation.

It is observable, that Cham was Noe's youngest son. In early youth there is the

greatest danger of yielding to an impulse of flippancy, freshness and impertinence to the disregard of the honor that is due to parents. Cham no doubt thought he was pert, smart and cute in treating his father as he did. His cuteness and his pretendedly wise remarks brought down a tremendous curse from God. Nor was there any allowance made for his immaturity and impulsiveness. He had not only the promptings of nature but also the good example of his elder brothers to guide him and to warn him against the misdemeanor he perpetrated. This was not his first offense. No son treats his father with contumely and ridicule at one bound; but he advances towards this grossness gradually by lighter breaches of honor and respect, in thought, word and deed, towards his parent. No doubt he had previously spoken to his father disrespectfully and rudely; he had laughed at and made fun of certain things his father said or did; he had given him back talk and contradicted him, or given him no answer at all: they were all preparatory stages leading to the final insult that was visited by the awful curse of his father, which was immediately sanctioned and executed by God.

God Allows No Excuse Against His Rights

Neither did it avail Cham as an excuse or a palliation of his guilt, that his father had

exposed himself to discredit and ignominy by his conduct. The curse was inflicted just the same. No matter how a parent demeans himself, the fact alone that he is a parent entitles him to the honor of his children on all occasions. Whatever he may do or have done can not erase or cancel his claim upon their respect. As was mentioned above, whoever and however he may be, since God used him to bestow the gift of existence upon them, he will always stand before them as God's representative, challenging their reverence and gratitude. This, of course, applies to the mother as well as to the father. For this reason the fourth commandment does not say: "Honor thy father and thy mother as long as they are good and virtuous," but it simply insists that father and mother must be honored, meaning always and under all conditions, just because they are father and mother, even though any other claim to honor may be wanting in them.

This ought to be borne in mind by children who are tempted to be ashamed of their parents because of their poverty, or lack of good manners, language, culture, or what not. Whatever the parents' real or imaginary deficiencies may be, these should disappear entirely in the eyes of children when contrasted with their claim on the children's gratefulness and affectionate consideration. When they themselves

get more sense and acquire a truer appraisal of things in general, children will often blush when they remember their weakness in being ashamed of their parents for this reason or for that.

Not All Parents Are Saints

No one says that parents are never bad and vicious; or that their sins should be construed as virtuous deeds, and that children should be proud of, and glory in, their parents' transgressions. Nothing of the kind. All that is demanded is, that in spite of whatever failings, sins and vices the parents may be guilty of, the children, in view of their very parenthood, never cease honoring and respecting them. Far from divulging and parading their parents' faults before others unnecessarily, or even making them the objects of their own private conversations among themselves, they will do what they can, after the example of Sem and Japheth, to cover and hide as much as possible the weaknesses and excesses of their parents, and to bury them in charitable oblivion. Nothing draws the blessing of God more forcibly and copiously upon a child than this generous filial behavior. This especially accounts for the observation, that bad parents not infrequently have good and prosperous children. The explanation is simple. Because the children

bear with, overlook and cover up the infirmities of their parents, God showers His graces upon them richly and effectively.

His Hair Weighed Three Pounds

The fate of Absolom, the ungrateful son of David, is another example of the terrific curse that overcomes the child that is disloyal to its parent. Absolom was very handsome. He had a magnificent growth of hair that gave him the appearance of matchless beauty. The Bible says his hair was so heavy that, when he cut it once a year, it weighed about three pounds. As often happens, his beauty made him conceited and selfish. He was much admired and idolized on all sides. This filled him with the mad ambition of becoming king even while his father was still living and reigning. In the most nefarious manner he plotted against his aging and venerable father, determined to deprive him of his throne, even if he had to make war on him to achieve it. In other ways, too, he abused and disgraced his father by a most shameful and brutal conduct. David himself had sinned terribly against God, it is true. But it was not the part of his son to inflict punishment upon him. In his iniquitous attempt against his father, Absolom himself was routed and, fleeing from his pursuers, was caught in a tree by the very hair of his

head, and was stabbed in the heart by one of David's soldiers, after David had given the express command that no harm should be done his son Absolom, even though he was machinating against David's throne and life. David forgave him, but God, taking the matter in His own hands, cursed and punished him for his treachery against his father.

The Danger of Popularity

This story recalls to us the sad fact, that it is often the very popular child that is inclined to rebel against its parents, because it is convinced that they stand in the way of its pleasures and enjoyments, of its social triumphs, or of its rise and eminence in the world. It shrinks not from wishing them dead and acting towards them in a way as to accelerate their death. It is fretful and spiteful, self-assertive and independent, resentful and stubborn, deceitful and intriguing, vindictive and contumacious. Instead of abiding its time, and waiting for its career to develop naturally, normally and gradually, it precipitates a certain love affair or business matter impatiently, indeliberately and passionately, and thereby hastens to its own ruin, while it brings woe and disaster upon its parents. Had Absolom taken his father into his confidence from the start, and been to him a real pal and chum,

as children should be to their parents, he would have consulted his own best interests in every way by substantially promoting the success and happiness of his father. By his selfish conduct he wrecked his father's life temporarily and his own permanently. Yet, when he started out on his work of destruction he was cocksure of success, and in his overweening self-reliance he was inaccessible to sober counsel or mature guidance.

They Throw Rocks Upon It

The grave of Absolom is still shown in the Holy Land. It is marked by a heap of rocks that have been and are still being thrown upon it by the passers-by in everlasting contempt of his unspeakable meanness and vileness, and as a lesson to all sons and daughters to heed carefully the fourth commandment. What a disgrace to have to serve as such a caution for all times to come! What a contrast to the vast and vehement ambitions of the comely and popular prince of the kingdom! How different would not be the name and fame of Absolom in history today, had he honored his father and, in consequence, lived long in the land the Lord his God would have given him!

This sad but wholesome lesson should be taken to heart by such sons and daughters who rebel against and grievously disobey their

parents, and thus commit mortal sins. Against the express command of their parents they frequent dangerous places of amusement, associate with undesirable and bad companions, keep late hours without the proper supervision and, when called to task for it by their parents, they either give them no answer at all, or tell them plainly, that it is none of their business and that they should keep their mouth shut, or they go so far as to curse them outright, to strike them and do them bodily harm. It will not be long and these inhuman children will be like Absolom dangling from the fatal tree: somehow or other misery and wretchedness will overtake them and compass them about entirely and forever. God will not be mocked. His justice and retributions are the same today as they were in the time of David, about three thousand years ago.

The Fatal Auto Ride

It happened in the week of the ladies' mission in a large city parish several years ago. After one of the evening services a young lady, about twenty years of age, told her mother of being invited to an automobile ride with a girl friend and two young men. The mother justly replied, that the time of the mission and the late hour of the evening were not favorable to such a ride, and hence she could not give her consent. The

daughter was much hurt by her mother's refusal. She grumbled and cried and told her mother all kinds of uncomplimentary things of being narrow and hard and intolerable. The good woman, however, would not budge from her decision. It was a matter of conscience with her. She bade the girl to retire and forget about the matter. After her daughter went to bed, the mother retired also, feeling rather good over her determination to keep her child at home in the late evening.

The girl merely feigned sleep. When she was satisfied that her mother was asleep, she stole softly out of bed, dressed and made her exit from the house. She arranged to meet her friends anyway, and they had the ride as planned. They went to a roadhouse, had several drinks and what they considered quite a good time. It was well past midnight when they started for home. The hour being advanced, the chauffeur, who was not too sober, sped wildly along the road. Everybody was jovial and hilarious when suddenly there was a crash, a shriek, and the moans and groans of death. The machine had plunged down a deep embankment to land beneath as a total wreck with three of the occupants dead, and the other in a dying condition. The aforesaid girl was among the dead.

The salvage crew called up her home on the telephone. The mother, awaking from a deep and soothing slumber, answered the call, not a little startled by the long and incessant ring. When she was told gently, that it seemed her daughter had met with an accident, she replied that it must be a mistake of identification, as her daughter was at home with her and sound asleep. They bade her to make sure, that her daughter was at home. Imagine her horror when, going into her daughter's room, she found the bed undone, but no trace of the girl. A few moments later they carried the child's bloody and mangled corpse into the room, to be left alone with the grief-stricken and horrified mother. Indeed, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom., 6, 23).

It evidently did not avail this girl to be convinced, that her mother's refusal was uncalled-for, over-timid, ultra-conservative, narrow, old-fashioned and out of date, and on the head of that conviction to be her own mistress, and be guided by her own pretendedly saner and better judgment. The wages of her sin was death.

Parents Are Human

Parents are not infallible. Often their mental vision is much circumscribed, and their judgments are frequently close and rigid. Still,

deputed as they are by God to be His representatives to their children, and their best and foremost guardian angels in their early life, they somehow possess a peculiar intuition as to what is best for their children, and an instinctive light to guide them safe and sound. For this reason a child, that obsequiously obeys its parents in all things, provided, of course, they command nothing sinful or beyond their competency, never is known to go wrong or invite misfortune for itself: whereas the child, that in its vain conceit and selfish pride believes it can afford to override the precepts of its parents, and improve upon them by following its own lights and fancies, usually lives to rue its folly bitterly, and to pay dearly for its insubordination.

The girl in the story lost her life because of her disobedience to her mother. This was tragic. Yet in losing her earthly life, she may have had the grace to make an act of perfect contrition during her fall, and thus to save her soul. In a less dramatic and striking manner there are daily a number of Catholic young people, young men as well as young ladies, who in consequence of disobeying their parents in a serious matter lose, at once or gradually, what is infinitely more precious than life itself. For going with a certain person to a dance, a show, or for a ride in an automobile; or for

reading a certain book or magazine or newspaper, against which they were warned, and which were forbidden them, by the parents: they lose their innocence, their virtue, their virginity, or their holy faith; often irremediably and forever. Their sin of disobedience is a grievous one, owing to the subject matter of the command, and the wages of it are consequently frightful, even as death itself.

A Girl at Twenty, Thirty, Forty

In general parents are not at all so shallow of mind, and so unaware of the things of life, and so inexperienced in matters of the world as the children like to believe and make others believe they are. A learned and pious bishop used to say: "When a girl is twenty, she knows that her mother doesn't know anything; when she is thirty, she begins to admit that her mother knew something after all; when she is forty, she begins to wonder how her mother could know so much when she was just a young woman." The same is true as to the father, and the knowledge or lack of knowledge attributed to him by his children.

Fortunately among our Catholic young people gross delinquencies against parents are not the rule but rare exceptions. Yet from minor transgressions of the fourth commandment many of them are not immune. They may

not hurt their parents openly, by defiance and rebelliousness, or by a rude and insulting behavior, but indirectly they inflict pain upon them variously and unnecessarily. They pay them little attention, let alone reverence and respect. They make no effort to tender them the little courtesies and sweet amenities of domestic intercourse. They do not make them their confidants. Often they will not even let the parents know what salary they make, what company they keep, what places of amusement they frequent, and what are their personal, social, business and life interests.

The Sacred Personal Domain

Of course, all young men and women, minors though they be, have a certain domain of sacred privacy of a personal nature, which no one, not even a parent, has a right to violate or intrude upon: but the more a child takes its parents into its confidence regarding the ordinary affairs of life, in a prudent and filial manner, the more it pleases them and benefits itself, besides rendering their and its own life happier and sweeter. As was intimated before, for their very position parents seem to be endowed by God with a special insight and foresight in the interest of their children. At any rate, there is never an excuse for a child not to show its parents the same civility, courteous-

ness, heartiness and sympathy which it shows to certain persons outside of the family, on whatsoever occasion and for whatsoever reasons. No one at all can have so great a claim upon these qualities of a child's disposition and manner as its parents. If it bestows the favor of them liberally upon others whilst it denies their exhibition to its parents, far from discovering true culture and nobility with its fine and polished conduct towards strangers, it betrays a vile and ignoble mind, and a cold and selfish heart by its unloving attitude towards its parents.

Your Home Is Not a Boarding House

No Catholic young man or lady should behave towards the home as though it were a mere boarding house: a place to which one hies for the necessary meals and sleep, but from which one flies elsewhere in quest of real pleasure and thorough enjoyment. While an arrangement with the parents regarding the payment of a certain weekly fee on the part of a wage-earning child may be perfectly in order, and often even very wise: still this arrangement must never beget in the child the sinister impression, that its parents are its servants and ought to be beholden to it for the money it gives them. It will rather be convinced, that no matter how long it lives and what it may

give or do for the parents, it will never be able to discharge the debt it owes them. Piously overwhelmed and stimulated by this thought, it will endeavor as much as possible to make up the lack of substantial retribution by the sweetness, warmth, devotion and love of its filial conduct in all things. It will let the parents know and feel, that after the church of God there is no place in which it would rather be than at home with its father and mother, before whom, with whom and for whom it displays its most lovable traits and most fascinating charms of disposition and behavior. This is what God meant when He said: "Honor thy father and thy mother."

The Second Childhood

A child is bound to obey its parents as long as it remains under the parental roof and does not establish an independent household of its own. It is obliged to honor, respect and love its parents as long as it lives; even after the parents are dead, the child must honor and love them in memory, in thought, word and deed. In fact, the fourth commandment urges the more, the older and more helpless the parents become. It is indicative of a hard and egotistic temperament when a child attempts to excuse its rudeness, coldness and indifference towards its parents by alleging that they

are old, funny, unpleasant, hard to get on with, and exorbitant in their demands of attention, service and consideration. Old age has its infirmities of body and mind; hence it is called a second childhood. Far from being a reason dispensing or exempting a child from its filial duties of love and gratitude towards its parents, they rather constitute a particular occasion and a strong reason for the virtuous and at times heroic exercise of these duties. And here again the reminder is in order that, whatever a child may do for its parents, it will never be able to liquidate its debt of gratitude towards them, no matter how long a period it has to do it. In view of this obvious and sacred truth, in the eyes of a dutiful child no parents ever live or linger too long on earth, however sick, destitute, needy and queer they may be; they always depart too soon, namely before it has a chance to pay its debt of gratitude towards them, and while it is still most eager to shower its warmest and most devoted love upon them.

"The Groanings of Thy Mother"

The Bible emphasizes this truth in these solemn words: "With thy whole heart honor thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother. Remember that thou hadst not been born but through them: and make a return to

them as they have done for thee" (Ecclus., 7, 28-30). "The groanings of thy mother" is significative. It refers to the labor of birth and the danger of life attending it for the mother. Our soldiers who went overseas were much applauded and proclaimed as heroes for "going over the top", as the saying was, or for exposing themselves to an imminent and apparently certain danger of death. Yet their risk of life was not nearly so great as was that undergone by your mother at your birth. She undertook the risk not in the interest of an entire country, but in your personal behalf. And this was only the beginning of her sacrifices for you.

Your mother may be old, odd and whimsical now, but there was a time when she was young, beautiful and lovable even as any girl you know. She was personally liked, her company was courted and her presence desired on all occasions. She was invited to dances, to shows, to outings and excursions of various and the most luring descriptions. And she loved the dance-floor and the theatre and other places of carefree amusement and diversion. Yet she declined one invitation after another, with whatever pressure they were extended and however strong an appeal they made to her likes and tastes. She preferred to stay close at home, restricted and confined, day after day,

and night upon night, for days and months and years together, while her companions were out having a grand and glorious time, of which they would give her glowing reports and graphic details whenever they called on her. Still she did not get out of her enclosure or discontinue her aloofness from worldly pleasures and pastimes.

What Gave Her the Power?

What was the charm that restrained her, and what was the object that held her to this high-tensioned and long-sustained self-repression? It was you. In her young and best womanhood God gave her a child which was you, and with the advent of this child life took on a different hue and assumed a deeper significance for your mother. At your birth she was willing to die so you might live. After you were born she sacrificed her days and nights for you. She renounced the sweetest pleasures for you. She led a cloistral life at home for you. She gave up her necessary sleep for you, and more than once risked her health for you. No occupation was considered, and no pleasure thought of before your interests were secured.

But her unceasing devotion, anxiety and care for you gradually told on her corporally and mentally. Her youth departed, her beauty faded, her hair discolored, her skin wrinkled and shrivelled, her form grew haggard and her

figure stooped, her eyes lost their luster, her voice its mirthful ring, her heart its gladness, her mind its resourcefulness, and her soul its buoyancy and hopefulness. And now when the conditions are reversed: when you are grown up, and in the best years of young womanhood or manhood, while your mother is verging towards, or has already attained her second childhood, and in consequence makes certain demands upon your time, attention and patience, and asks you to spend a little of your leisure in her company, or begs you not to keep late hours, but to be home at a reasonable time, not to go to a certain amusement or social gathering: are you going to repay her by cold neglect, cutting indifference and heartless defiance? Are you really going to "forget the groanings of your mother"? And what has been said with reference to your mother applies as strongly, although in a different manner, to your father also.

Chained Hands and Feet

Several years ago, when I was traveling on the railroad in the Middle States on my way to preach a mission, I saw a fine looking young man sitting across the aisle of the car from me. He was about twenty-three years old, nicely dressed and well groomed. He seemed to be quite at ease and unconcerned, although

he was chained hands and feet, and was being conducted somewhere by the sheriff and his deputy. The young man offered a cigarette to the deputy, who declined it; he himself, however, lit one and smoked it with apparent enjoyment. He spoke freely to the deputy, who answered briefly, yes or no, for he was evidently not in a mood to speak.

Upon my asking a fellow passenger on the train what was wrong with the young man I was told, that for having been implicated in a murder he was sentenced to be hanged, and that he was being taken to the place of execution. It was an uncanny feeling, indeed, to be so close to such a robust and handsome youth, and to be aware, that within two days his life was to be snuffed out by the power of the law.

He Had a Good Mother

Being interested, I followed the case in the newspapers, and noticed that the execution of sentence took place as scheduled. The young man, unfortunately, in a way, was a Catholic. He had a good mother—sometimes the best parents have wayward children—who had done everything to have him pardoned or his sentence commuted: but to no avail. Not being able to save his life, she said she would stand by him to the last. She did. She was present as he died on the gallows.

The point that interests us here is this: This young man had left his home and his mother in the east, and struck out into the world in quest of adventure, getting now into one and now into another trouble through his disregard of his mother's counsels, wishes and precepts. Had he minded her, his would have been a splendid and enviable career. But he did not care how he hurt and cut her by his selfish, thoughtless and reckless conduct. Finally he brought upon her, who was his only friend in his plight, and who sacrificed all she had to deliver him from it, undeserving as he was of her love and devotion, infinite anguish of heart and utter disgrace. Big and deep as was her love and devotion to him, so hard and cruel were his coldness and indifference to her.

Picture this poor distracted mother, standing near the gallows as her son is hurled into a miserable and ignominious death: and then you have, more or less, a conception of the pitiable lot of thousands of Catholic mothers and fathers in our land. Whilst not on or near the gallows, still in the loneliness of their homes they are desolate and wretched, while they contemplate the loss of virtue, honor and faith on the part of untoward children, who have spurned their loving counsels, and have thrown their wise precepts and the influence of their good example to the winds.

Day-Dreams That Never Come True

Children often make the mistake of indulging in day-dreams, in which they view themselves as having grown rich and prosperous, and establishing their aged parents in a fine, comfortable and cozy home, and providing them with plenty of money and everything else they desire or fancy: in the meantime, however, these same children, who are idly and uselessly dreaming of being grand to their parents in the uncertain future, often neglect to give their parents, in the present and actual time, the marks of filial affection and consideration it is in their power to give them. They would do far better if they stopped dreaming, and now and here used the opportunities—and there are many of them daily—that come their way to fill their parents' life with pleasure and happiness. It is not so much worldly comfort and riches the parents desire to receive from their children, but genuine love and sincere honor. And there is never any excuse to defer the payment of these to a future day, when they can be rendered very well and most satisfactorily at once.

She Knew Him Not

The sad feature of the story of St. Alexius comes to mind. On his wedding day, under an impulse from on high, he suddenly disap-

peared. His bride and his parents searched for him everywhere with no results. Several years later a poor beggar asked Alexius' mother for a place to sleep in her palace. She readily granted it and kept the beggar in her house seventeen years. When he took sick she nursed him charitably. As he was dying and his eye was breaking, she recognized in the beggar her son Alexius. Grief-stricken, she cried: "Oh, my son Alexius, why did I not recognize you sooner! How I should have loved you and caressed you, instead of treating you, my dearest son, only as a beggar and a stranger! Now, alas, it is too late. You are dead and cold!"

She was not to blame. But many sons and daughters, who do not appreciate their parents and recognize their love and benefits until their parents lie dead and cold before them, will be bitterly grieved and stricken with unallayable remorse as they cry out: "Oh, if only I had duly loved my father and mother when I had the opportunity, instead of treating them as strangers and beggars! Now, alas, it is too late. Their bodies are lying senseless and lifeless before me, and my love, gratitude and homage are lost upon them. Why did I not tender these sentiments when they would have made the days of my parents happy, easy and sweet. Now it is too late: forever too late!"

The Space Is Short and Uncertain

In regard to the observance of the fourth commandment a child will do well by bearing in mind, that the period allotted to it, as far as the living parents come in question, is often very brief; and frequently it comes to an abrupt close. In other words, children have their parents with them but a short time and ere they are aware of it they lose them through death. Here the words of Jesus come to mind: "I must work the works of Him That sent Me [His Father], whilst it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John, 9, 4). A dutiful child takes no chances. It shows its parents all possible love, obedience and honor whilst they are alive, rather than neglect its obligations towards them from day to day until they are suddenly snatched away by death, leaving it to regret its lack of filial duty to the end of its days.

A Hundred Dollars for Her Hair

Some time ago the daily paper brought a touching story of a fourteen year old girl's love for her mother. The girl was riding in a street car when she noticed that two ladies who were sitting across from her were admiring her beautiful long tresses of hair. She heard one say to the other: "I would give a hundred dollars for such hair." The girl decided to

alight from the car with the ladies. She modestly accosted the one who made the aforesaid declaration and said: "Dear lady, I overheard you saying that you would give a hundred dollars for my hair. I shall be glad to cut it off and give it to you for a hundred dollars. Mother is sick and has to undergo an operation; but she is too poor to submit to one. The hundred dollars may save her life." The lady explained that she did not mean her utterance in this sense; but she would be willing to give a hundred dollars if such pretty hair would grow on her own head. Yet, in view of the girl's filial concern for her mother, the two ladies gave the girl a hundred dollars towards her mother's prospective operation, and let her keep her hair besides.

What Will You Give Up?

No doubt many young people could confer a similar favor upon their parents and afford them an equal relief, if they gave up, not their hair, but certain shady and reprehensible pleasures, or obnoxious habits, such as staying out late at night, or drinking or gambling; or if they discontinued certain dubious acquaintanceships or company-keeping; or if they frequented the sacraments and attended divine services with more eagerness and regularity. The sacrifice would not cost the children much,

but it would result in great comfort and substantial consolation for the parents. O for more children who are thoroughly grateful, considerate and loving towards their greatest earthly benefactors, their parents!

While you are reading this there are, somewhere on earth, parents on their deathbeds. Their sons and daughters are kneeling about, praying for them. The death of its parents is always a very sad moment for the child. Yet the sadness of this moment is softened and even sweetened, when the child can lay the balm to its soul, that throughout the life of its parents it did all in its power to render them happy and contented by honoring, obeying and loving them, and by scrupulously avoiding to displease, let alone, to hurt them. But if kneeling at their dying bed, the child feels the bitter sting of conscience, so that it has to own and say: "It is I who am responsible, that my father or mother is dying today, at so early a stage of life; but for me and my waywardness he or she would still be enjoying good health and have many years to live; by my disobedience, impertinence, ingratitude, coldness and rudeness I have broken the heart and hastened the death of my parent"—this moment is one of utter desolation and inconsolable grief. Somehow the cemetery is always

a sorrowful place. It is immensely and poignantly so for the child that can not go there but to visit the grave of a parent, whose body would not be there at so early a date but for the child's unfilial heartlessness and cruelty. To be guilty of having sent its parents to the graveyard before their time is a bitter and haunting memory a child will hardly ever get rid of; even as there is hardly a sweeter and a more clinging and soothing recollection in life than that of having duly honored father and mother.

Sorrow Overcomes You

Perhaps, as you are reflecting upon this, a great sorrow is creeping over you. You have already lost your father or mother, or both. You are asking yourself if you always took the proper filial attitude towards them when they were living. Maybe with considerable remorse you recall a number of instances when you were cold, harsh, rude and disobedient to them. You may even have been guilty of grievous insults and serious insubordination towards them that embittered and abbreviated their days upon earth.

Mere regret is unavailing now. But the fact alone that you regret the past, and wish your parents were with you again so you could atone for it all by showering them with your

love, grateful attention and unfailing compliance with their wishes, is a sign of a noble filial mind, that previously acted more from thoughtlessness and weakness than from sheer malice. The way for you now to make redress and give indemnity to your deceased parents is to hold their memory sacred by conscientiously living up to the ideals they inculcated by word and example, and to pray for them daily and offer up the Holy Sacrifice and Holy Communion, and gain many indulgences for them. Regarding your injuries towards them they have long ago prayed with Jesus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke, 23, 34).

When God Rewards

Joseph of Egypt was visibly protected by God, and he rose to great earthly prosperity, honor and fame as a reward for his obsequiousness and love to his father—his mother having died when he was very young. Tobias, because of his veneration for his parents and his close responsiveness to their wishes, received an archangel for his guide on a long and dangerous trip, was assisted unto great fortunes in business and in marriage, succeeded in restoring sight to his aged father and in bringing much happiness to his parents as well as to his parents-in-law.

The magnificent prize conferred upon Ruth teaches us that the reward promised by God for the observance of the fourth commandment has reference not only to the honor paid to parents strictly so-called, but also to all those who in a manner take the place of parents, such as parents-in-law, step-parents, guardians, or teachers. Ruth feelingly, devotedly and lovingly abided with her mother-in-law after the death of her own husband, saying in answer to Noemi's suggestion that she [Ruth] should repair to her own people: "Be not against me, to desire that I should leave thee and depart: for whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go: and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die: and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and so to me, and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee" (Ruth, 1, 16, 17). For this generous attachment to her mother-in-law—would that all children harbored the same sentiments for their mothers and fathers!—God chose her to be not only one of His chosen people, but even to be one of the foremothers of His Son, Jesus Christ. In this manner He kept His word, "that thou mayest be longlived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee."

The Biography of Jesus' Youth

The whole period of our Lord's adolescence and youth, from His twelfth to His thirtieth year, is recorded in the gospel by the little but very pregnant phrase: "He was subject to them" [to Mary and Joseph] (Luke, 2, 51). It is the way of the Bible to state the greatest truths in a few words, such as: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Gen., 1, 1). "And the Word was made Flesh" (John, 1, 14). What a wealth of doctrine is not contained in these short sentences! Similarly in the five words, "He was subject to them," is contained the best and most comprehensive compendium of instructions that can be given for the guidance and training of youth towards success and happiness. Whatever child lives up to this formula, embodied in our Lord's youth, will pave the way for a truly great and blissful life. Like unto Jesus, it, too, will advance "in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men" (ib. 52).

The Creator Obeys the Creature

Jesus was infinitely more intelligent, wise, prudent and far-seeing than was either Mary or Joseph. He was, in the best sense of the word, more modern and up-to-date in his views, and had a clearer understanding of the times in which He lived than they had: yet

"He was subject to them". What a wholesome damper on the pride, conceit and vanity of those children who, because they received a longer schooling and a wider book knowledge than their parents, consider themselves beyond the reach of their parental authority, direction and guidance!

It is noteworthy, too, that when Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus died, as it seems rather early in the life of our Lord, Jesus took over the care and support of His Mother by making a living for her and Himself by the humble labor of His hands. He thus gave a wonderful example of unselfish devotion and sacrifice to every young person upon whom a father or mother may be dependent.

And the last thought of Jesus on the Cross, in the midst of His own bitter pains and horrid agony, was a loving, filial provision for His dear Mother. With His dying breath He asked John, His beloved disciple, to take her unto himself as his own, saying to him: "Behold thy Mother!" (John, 19, 27). At the sight of this what Catholic child can help being inspired with a real, thorough, ardent and operative love for its father and mother, in life and in death?

CHAPTER IV.

Chastity

PART ONE

"Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (*Matt.*, 5, 8).

FOR the instruction and inspiration of children and young people Jesus did not appear on earth in adult age, but condescended to be a child and a youth Himself. In the previous chapter we considered the main lesson He gave to young men and women for all times to come by having His entire youth described by the words: "He was subject to them."

The second lesson He taught them from the very beginning of His earthly existence and which, in importance and consequential value, is equal to the first, was the love of chastity, or the virtue of holy purity. He wanted everyone who was in any way associated with His childhood and adolescence to be absolutely pure and beyond suspicion. His Mother had to be a spotless and most pure virgin, even in her divine motherhood. His foster-father was

and remained a virgin. His precursor, who prepared the way for Him, St. John the Baptist, was and remained a virgin. Why this great predilection for and emphatic insistence on holy virginity and purity on the part of Jesus in the choice of His intimate companions in the very start of His life? To impress upon all young people the high value and urgent necessity of the virtue of chastity, particularly in the beginning of their career on earth. After the virtue of obedience to parents nothing is more likely to preserve them from the dangers of spiritual, moral, mental and physical ruin, and to shape their entire life's course unto success and happiness, than the virtue of holy purity. The sooner they learn to value and prize it, not only on religious grounds, but also from a sense of their temporal well-being and personal comfort, the better are their prospects for a blissful and grateful earthly sojourn.

St. Anthony's Reward

In His very first sermon to the multitudes Jesus declared pointedly: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (Matt., 5, 8). The clean of heart shall see God not only in heaven, but even on this earth. Sometimes they see Him in celestial visions, as we read in the lives of the saints; St. Anthony, for instance, was vouchsafed to receive the divine

Infant in his arms from the Blessed Mother herself; but ordinarily the clean of heart see God through the clarity, peace and joy of conscience which are, so to speak, the aroma of His presence and the veils of His loveliness.

The young man who approached our Lord to ask Him how to get to heaven was told by Jesus: "Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery," etc. (Mark, 10, 19). Our Lord rehearsed the commandments to the youth by starting with the precept of chastity and by ending with that of the honor that is to be paid to parents, in order to bring into relief the supreme importance of both in adolescent life. He began by emphasizing chastity as if to apply the supreme test to the young man's goodness right away. If he answered it satisfactorily, he had a good chance to be approved worthy of further attention. Jesus mentioned chastity before the honor that is due to parents to indicate, no doubt, that a youth who is chaste will usually have little difficulty in paying the proper respect to his parents. At any rate, no sooner the young man assured Jesus, saying: "All these things I have observed from my youth" (ib., 20), Jesus loved him. He loved him because his mind was pure and his heart was chaste. Jesus loved him so much that He wanted to make him one of His favorite disciples, and He said to him: "Come, follow Me."

Savage Beasts Honored Them

This episode of the gospel reminds us of the rapturous exclamation of the Book of Wisdom (4, 1, 2): "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." In the lives of the martyrs we read, that not only brutal men, but even savage beasts, that had been made mad with hunger, and were turned loose upon the helpless Christian virgins standing in the arena, lost their ferocity and were subdued unto gentleness and meekness by the gaze of pure and innocent maidenhood. Involving as it does a consistent and relentless conquest of the soul over the body, of the higher over the inferior nature, chastity elevates its possessor to a superior plane, and endows him or her with a sway over others that is as wholesome and sweet as it is resistless and enduring. It recalls the days of paradise.

Thrown Into Reverse

All these and similar advantages and excellences are thrown completely into reverse by impurity. The young person who becomes a victim to unchastity at once feels the weight of

the sentence: "Cursed are the unclean of heart, for they shall not see God." Although our Savior did not utter this curse directly, He implied it in the blessing He spoke over the pure of heart. The unclean of heart will not only not see God face to face in eternity, but they are at once deprived of the sight of God here on earth through the vice of immorality. Nothing seems to shut the soul off from God so quickly and definitely, and to place so heavy and impenetrable a veil between the two, as the indulgence in sensuality. By this vice the soul surrenders its dignity and preeminence to the flesh, and by making an idol of the flesh in its lowest and vilest cravings the soul forfeits its resemblance to God and is soon alienated from Him to such a degree that it no longer sees Him at any time or anywhere.

Hiding from God

This sin begets in its perpetrators the attitude of our first parents after their sin, who hid themselves from God so He would not see them, and they would not have to see Him, although before their sin it had been their greatest delight to walk with God "in paradise in the afternoon air" (Gen., 3, 8). Similarly a young person may have been ever so close to and familiar with God, once he or she becomes a victim of impurity, this sweet and intimate

relation suddenly turns into coldness and estrangement. The unhappy person dreads to see or to be seen by God, and instinctively, as through a diabolical obsession, flies from God. In addition to this, no sin inclines and tempts a person so strongly and insinuatingly to make an unworthy confession, through concealment and insincerity, and, consequently, to receive Holy Communion sacrilegiously, as the sin of impurity. In this way, too, this sin removes the soul far from God, and hastens to blind the mind and harden the heart; in other words to bring on final impenitence, or the unforgivable sin. It is like a black film that grows over the eye of the soul, like a deadly cataract, and shuts it to the light of grace.

The Sad Change

And the same fatal force which destroys the sweet relation with God in a soul that is impure, mars its charm for and its influence over men. Somehow the expression of the face is dimmed, the open look of the eye is obscured, the smile appears suspicious, and the former easy manner, graceful carriage and carefree laughter assume an element of unreality, deceit and distrust, and of consequent awkwardness, embarrassment and weakness. All this is not only the effect of the curse of God, but also of an unescapable law of nature. As soon as the

higher power in man succumbs to the lower, the entire person degenerates and is quickly reduced to slavery and impotency. How much the vice of impurity degrades man is told us by an incident in the gospel. One day our Lord was met by "two that were possessed with devils, exceeding fierce, so that none could pass that way. And behold they cried out, saying: What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was, not far from them, a herd of many swine feeding. And the devils besought Him, saying: If Thou cast us out hence, send us into the herd of swine. And He said to them: Go. But they going out went into the swine" (Matt., 8, 28 sqq.). They were the devils of impurity. They could not suffer the approach of Jesus, the lover of chastity. Here, particularly, the words of our Lord are verified, that it is impossible to serve two masters. We must choose between the God of purity and the demon of lust. They are and always will be bitterly opposed to one another. Are you hesitating in your choice?

It Clamors for Repetition

It is true that the sinister effects I have adduced as resulting from impurity do not necessarily follow upon every lapse against modesty. When one sins once or again through sheer

weakness after a long and strenuous resistance to temptation he does not at once establish a positive coldness and a great distance between himself and God. If he repents of and humbly confesses his sin, he will readily find favor with God and be restored to His friendship. On the other hand, there is no sin which clamors more insistently for repetition than the sin of impurity. And the oftener it is repeated, and the worse it gets, the greater and more complete becomes the alienation of the soul from God, and the more difficult its reconciliation with Him. No vicious habit appears to grow upon a man more swiftly and to domineer him more tyrannically than the habit of impurity. Relapse into every sin invites spiritual slavery, but nowhere with such velocity and finality as in the sphere of indecency. For this reason theologians call whatever pertains or leads to impurity "lubricous", or slippery, since it is very difficult for one who allows himself to start on it to come to a stop until he sinks to the lowest depths of sensuousness and depravity.

The Upward and Downward Trend

The first step in the civilization of a barbarous people is the inculcation of chastity. The higher it rises in the cultivation of purity, the more susceptible it becomes of the better,

nobler and the more godlike things of life. On the other hand, impurity is always either the source or at least the accompaniment of the degradation and deterioration of a race, and of its relapse into absolute or relative barbarism. And what is true of a race applies with equal force to the individual: his rise or fall in true culture and civilization keeps time and step with his rise or fall in the practice of chastity.

The ancient Romans had their vestal virgins in testimony of the human instinct to reverence and prize whatever makes for purity and chastity. Practically every pagan nation has had or has today some similar expression of the same potent appreciation of and respect for purity. The Roman vestal virgins, as long as they were at least outwardly true to their profession of virginity, were held in such esteem that, if a conquering hero, returning from glorious victories, was having a triumphal procession through the streets of Rome, and a vestal virgin came the other way, the procession was halted in reverence to her and the conqueror paid her public homage. If on the street she met the doleful procession of a man who was sentenced to death, and who was on his way to the place of the execution of sentence, she had the power to pardon him unconditionally on the spot. When the gladiators fought unto death in the

arena, the vestal virgin could decide at pleasure either for the life or death of the unhappy combatant. On the other hand, however, if the vestal virgin was found to be untrue to her vow of chastity, she was publicly and shamefully degraded, and buried alive because of the contumely she had brought upon herself by her infidelity to the virtue she professed. Whatever opinion one may hold of these various practices, they at any rate illustrate forcibly the tendency of the human heart to venerate and admire what is chaste, and to abhor and execrate what is unchaste.

The Maneuvers of the Unclean Spirit

Our Savior describes the state of the unfortunate victim of impurity, who falls back into the sins of the flesh again and again, in these words: "When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man . . . he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. . . . Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first" (Matt., 12, 43-45). If they who have surrendered themselves to impurity would but enter more into this doctrine of Jesus, and convince themselves that they are in reality in the power of a devil, or of seven or more terrible devils, they would con-

ceive a healthy and potent aversion and horror for impurity, and resolutely employ the means to throw off the dominion of the devils ere they succumb to it finally and forever.

The Dangers of Self-Deceit

It is the merest self-flattery and self-deceit to believe that one's sins of unchastity are due merely to a certain leaning of temperament, or color of disposition, or shade of bodily constitution; that they are at most mere weaknesses which one must here and there allow himself, and over which undue worry is out of place and uncalled for. The gospel tells us that out of Mary Magdalen, who had given herself to the gratifications of the flesh, "seven devils were gone forth." After her conversion to Jesus her personal disposition and temperament were the same: but the devils of impurity were banished from her. What ails many of our Catholic young men and women is not the condition of their blood or nerves, but the power of the demons established over them through sin. Nothing but the expulsion of, and continuous war on, these impure spirits will ever bring relief and a permanent cure to their souls.

What Are the Devil's Tactics?

How then does the evil spirit of impurity steal his way into a soul? Or, in what way is

the vice of impurity contracted? The devil uses various ruses to take possession of a soul, and he adapts his tactics to the personal traits and circumstances of the individual whom he attacks. Above all, he begins by catching the soul off its guard, if possible. He tries to render it over-confident and over-secure, and induces it to be unafraid and unwary of danger. Once he has the soul in this frame, he employs an associate who is already corrupt to tell the victim an immodest story, or he offers an obscence picture or newspaper or magazine article to the eye, or by something that casually happens he endeavors to arouse a morbid and dangerous curiosity in the soul.

Once the demon of unchastity seizes the imagination, the mind is the next victim, and soon begins to be flooded with impure thoughts and representations of various kinds and degrees of obscenity. If they are wilfully entertained and nursed they soon possess and obsess the mind so completely and exclusively, that it can hardly concentrate on anything else, or dwell on any subject whatever, without these indecent associations entering in and polluting every mental activity. They even control and contaminate the dreams of the individual. The whole functioning of the mind and fancy seems to be in the thralls of a veritable obsession on the part of a fierce demon of impurity.

A Short and Swift Step

From wilful impure thoughts and imaginations there is but a short and swift step to wilful obscene desires. At first these will be mere ineffectual desires, or a certain general leaning to experience the sensuous delights which the imagination pictures so attractively and enticingly. Soon these desires begin to take definite and concrete shape, and they become effective, inasmuch as the subject of them really wishes he or she had the opportunity to do a certain indecent act, and would actually do it, if the occasion were at hand.

These desires, when they are freely entertained and pursued, soon beget immodest looks upon, and actions with, oneself. If not checked betimes, these go from bad to worse, and soon end in the vicious practice called masturbation, pollution or self-abuse. Self-abuse consists in wilfully arousing one's sexual nature, by means of impure thoughts, desires, looks, touches, speech, actions, or bodily postures to what is called complete satisfaction or gratification.

The Sinfulness and Perils of Self-Abuse

When it is wilfully procured, directly or indirectly, or voluntarily indulged in, in case it comes unsolicited, self-abuse is always a mortal sin, as it is grievously contrary to nature. And being directly contrary to nature, or unnatural,

besides involving a serious offense against God, it is sooner or later avenged by nature and not seldom visited by severe and lasting physical penalties.

Being entirely private and secret of character, perhaps no vice is easier contracted, and none is quicker in getting a tyrannical hold on its victim, than the vice of self-abuse. It affects most intimately the nervous system, which is known to be the connecting link between body and soul, and the conductor of the power of the will. Whatever vitiates the nervous system in its innermost compartments—and nothing vitiates it more rapidly and devastatingly than the habit of self-abuse—exerts a weakening and a ruinous effect upon the human will. Boys and girls who have never yielded to the sin of pollution have comparatively little difficulty in abstaining from it for an indefinite period; whereas, if a young man or lady deliberately indulges in this sin but once, there is every danger that it will clamor with almost irresistible force for repetition, to which clamor the will, being weakened by the single surrender, finds it immensely hard to offer the necessary resolute and unyielding refusal. What, before its perpetration, was made to appear quite harmless and innocent by a morbid imagination, develops to be, no sooner it is sinfully sought or enjoyed, the proverbial snow-flake of

the Alps that swiftly grows into a death-administering avalanche, or the little spark of fire that sets ablaze and destroys a flourishing town within a very short period. One act of wilful self-abuse has often wrecked completely and destroyed forever the virtue and innocence of many years, even as one inundation or conflagration frequently wipes out the hard earnings and careful savings of a lifetime.

Health and Beauty Disappear

The evil effects of the unrestrained vice of self-abuse, and the same is true of impurity in all its phases, are quite noticeable in the body and mind, in the emotional and religious life of its victim. The derangement of the nervous system has a deleterious influence on the entire corporal and mental constitution. The body loses its vigor and resistive power, while the mind forfeits its robustness, alertness and resourcefulness. Many a youthful color, beautiful complexion, florid appearance, sprightly gait, graceful carriage and easy manner are hopelessly ruined by this unnatural practice; and many a brilliant mind is shorn of its power of initiative, spirit of enterprise, glow of originality, glamor of optimism, spring of alacrity and fire of enthusiasm by the same suicidal habit. No amount of natural good-naturedness and sunniness of temperament can

long withstand its ravages. It sickens the imagination, deadens the emotions, and brings on depression of spirits, melancholy, despondency and despair. Not to mention actual suicides who, alas, are not few, many are consigned to a hospital, sanitarium or psychopathic institution as a result of the vice of pollution; while many more, outside of such institutions, hamper their success and prosperity, and consequently blast their happiness and contentment in life through the same self-destructive process.

Ninety-Nine Out of a Hundred

Not infrequently the spiritual and religious life of the victim of self-abuse is disastrously affected through the unworthy reception of the sacraments. St. Jerome and St. Alphonsus give it as their opinion, that ninety-nine out of every hundred persons in hell owe their damnation to impurity. Be this as it may, it seems probable that about ninety-nine out of every hundred sacrilegious confessions are reducible to impurity. The subjects of it are either ashamed or too proud openly and humbly to confess their sins, according to their nature and the circumstances that multiply the number of mortal sins, or if they frankly confess them, they are not truly sorry for them and minded to discontinue them at once and forever.

In the last chapter of the last book of the Holy Bible we are given the just and proper classification of the vice of impurity in these straightforward and incisive words: "Without [outside of heaven] are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and everyone that loveth and maketh a lie" (Apoc., 22, 15). It is worthy of notice, that in this text murderers are mentioned immediately after the unchaste. The reason is, unchastity, when it is not restrained betimes, often leads to murder; not only to the murder of oneself in suicide, but often to the murder of an innocent third party; and not seldom to the worst possible kind of murder, the murder of an unborn child. "The wages of sin is death." In this case it is the death of a guiltless being, whose blood cries to heaven for vengeance upon its murderers who, like unto Cain, the murderer of Abel, will be marked by the wrath of God unto the end of their days in the way of merciless remorse, haunting regret and bitter self-reproach. But I am anticipating, and getting ahead of my subject.

The Fatal Advance

From sinning with himself or herself the victim of impurity easily and readily proceeds to sin with others, of the same or the opposite sex, luring them, or being wilfully lured by

them. No moral contagion is more infectious and more deadly than impurity. This contagion usually spreads in the first instance through indecent speech, salacious stories, double-meaning jokes, lascivious anecdotes and obscene insinuations. If you have three hundred fine apples in a barrel, all of them sound to the core, and you put one rotten one with them, the three hundred good ones will not cure the rotten one, but the rotten one will spoil all the good ones, gradually but surely, if they are not removed in good time. Even so one person, whose heart is rotten and whose mind reeks with impurity, has the baneful tendency to infect with the germ of obscenity everyone who does not use against it the precaution of avoiding the person's conversation entirely.

The Devils Departed

A holy priest was prefect of discipline in a boarding college. One day, so the story runs, as he was looking from his window over the playground of the students during the recreation period, he noticed a group of boys standing together and conversing in a lively manner. He at the same time observed, that a number of devils were impatiently flitting about the group, trying their best to tempt the boys to sin, but with no appearance of success. Presently

another boy came along to associate with the crowd, and no sooner he mingled with the boys all the devils disappeared and went elsewhere When the saintly man later on in prayer asked God why all the devils fled at the approach of that boy, he was given the answer, that the boy was infected through and through with impurity, so much so that he could not enter into any conversation without at once turning it into the channels of salaciousness; and because the devils knew that he alone could do more spiritual havoc with his immodest remarks and tales than all of them put together, they left the field trustingly to him, and hied themselves to other quarters for the destruction of souls.

"Beware, Bernardine Is Coming!"

St. Bernardine, as a young man, was of an entirely different stamp and wielded the opposite influence. He was so well known for his unimpeachable purity, stainless modesty and angelic delicacy of conscience that, whenever a party of young people were allowing themselves indecent liberties of speech, as soon as they spied him coming, they would change the subject at once with the caution: "Beware, Bernardine is coming!" Such should be the influence of every Catholic young man or lady upon their associations and surroundings.

As soon as the impure person succeeds in finding favor with his or her immodest conversations, the transition to impure acts is not far off. And once a beginning of these is made, the stride towards the vilest depths and grossest excesses of impurity becomes uncannily and, apparently, resistlessly powerful and wild. It overrides every consideration and is checked by no regard. The sweetest things on earth, such as virtue, honor, innocence, reputation, health, friendship, the love of parents and other close and dear relatives, fortune and success in life: the victim of impurity not only sacrifices unreservedly in his or her own regard, but also seduces others into their irremediable forfeiture, merely to use them for a moment's lust and beastly gratification.

"You Are the Temple of God"

The impure person, in the better days of innocence and purity, or even at the beginning of the career of sin, never dreamed he or she would descend to the level of a beast, yea, lower than the beast, in sensuous and passionate indulgence. This very humiliation seems to be one of God's punishments for this vile and slimy sin, by which the Christian desecrates and profanes the temple of the Holy Ghost and the dwelling place of the Most Holy Trinity, namely his own body, sanctified by

baptism and the other sacraments, and particularly consecrated again and again through the adorable Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, Who frequently inhabits this body corporally and really in Holy Communion. "Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Cor., 3, 16, 17). As a penalty for this desecration God allows the impure person to be one of those who "shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding," and over whom "the devil hath power" (Tob., 6, 17). And at times this devil of impurity exercises his weird power over his hapless victim to such an extent, that he or she will even stoop so low as to sin with an animal.

Dead Sea Apples

These things are as unpleasant to write as they are to read; but they may serve as a wholesome instruction and a timely warning to those who are tempted to forsake the thorny path of virtue for the primrose path of vice. Always and in every instance "the wages of sin is death" (Rom., 6, 23). The delights and pleasures of impurity, under whatsoever guise

the devil, the world, or a sickly imagination may paint them, are never anything else than Dead Sea apples, that look pretty and delectable outside, but are rotten and wormy inside, and always leave behind a taste of ashes and death. The very remorse and self-contempt, so bitter, pungent and crushing, which follow immediately upon the first sins of the flesh, especially the sin of self-abuse, are an evident protest of nature and nature's God against impurity and all its terrible consequences. Happy the person who heeds this warning the first time it is felt after a sad experience of sin! And happier still, if his remorse for sin, as frequently happens, goads him on to a greater love of God and a quenchless zeal for his own and others' salvation. But infinitely happier the person who, with the help of God's grace, has never incurred this displeasure of conscience and challenged its angry rebuke. Here, indeed, ignorance is bliss: the bliss of paradise, experienced by our first parents before their fall. "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God."

CHAPTER V.

Chastity

PART TWO

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, . . . that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (*Rom.*, 12, 1).

PRECIOUS as is the virtue of holy purity, and worthy of every care that can be expended upon its preservation, it is well for good and conscientious people to know and bear in mind, that its chief support, next to the grace of God, is common sense. This is an enemy to scrupulosity which, whatever may be its subjective excuses or even merits in a particular person, is practically in many cases more a promoter of, than a check to, impurity. Scrupulosity is an undue and excessive timidity with reference to the maintenance of integrity in thought, word and deed. Nothing that is excessive in whatsoever field or sphere makes for real profit and solid value. It always works havoc somehow. In the matter under consid-

eration scrupulosity overtaxes the mind, the imagination and the nervous systen, and consequently disturbs and weakens then, and as a result it enervates the will that is dependent upon and influenced by them, and gradually lessens its power of resistance.

Excess Invites Excess

It is therefore by no means an uncommon thing to observe that young people, of both sexes, who have been victims to abnormal scrupulosity for a long time, and inordinately fearful of the slightest failing against holy purity, of a sudden, yielding to the line of least resistance, throw off every restraint and hurl themselves headlong into the grossest lewdness and into the complete abandon of vice. Had they but been guided by common sense from the start, this disaster would never have befallen them. No matter what good intentions the individual may have, nature can stand so much and no more, and no one can strain it with impunity.

Normal Scrupulosity

I have spoken of an abnormal scrupulosity. There is a normal scrupulosity that is at some period or other of their spiritual life experienced by almost all people who pursue piety and strive after virtue and perfection intensely. They

will be somewhat too delicate of conscience and too much worried regarding their state of soul. But this is usually only a passing anxiety that aims to try them, and humble them, and lead them on to a proper appraisal of spiritual things and to the correct personal adjustment of themselves. It is a good lesson and a valuable experience for them. It makes them distrust themselves and place all their confidence in God. It disposes them to be sympathetic towards and considerate of others who may be afflicted in the same manner as they have been. Yet by dint of good judgment and common sense they soon overcome this perturbation of mind and bring their conscience back to a true and just balance.

Abnormal Scrupulosity

When scrupulosity becomes abnormal, however, and refuses to yield to reason, it easily does much harm to the soul as well as to the body. It pleases neither God nor men. It is an insidious and powerful ally of the devil who, as St. Vincent de Paul tells us, when he sees that he can not get a soul into his power in any other way, as a last resource tries scrupulosity and, alas, often succeeds with it. Of course there are instances in which the scrupulous person is not at all responsible for the affliction, which may be due to some constitu-

tional disorder that is beyond the patient's control; or it may be an unusual trial sent by God for purposes that He alone knows: in these cases scrupulosity must be borne with patience and resignation to God's sweet and adorable will just as the many other inescapable bodily and mental tribulations incidental to our earthly pilgrimage. And the scrupulous person will reap a great reward for his or her abiding and cheerful conformity to God's providence in the terrible ordeal. Either God will have the trial suddenly to come to an end and make room for great peace of mind and joy of heart, as He did in the case of a number of saints, or He will at any rate grant the person a peaceful and happy death, and an immense reward in heaven.

The Cure of Scrupulosity

In most cases, however, even abnormal scrupulosity can be cured, provided the afflicted person exhibits the humility, docility and resoluteness which the cure postulates. In other words, absolute, unconditional and resolute obedience to one's spiritual guide or confessor constitutes the only cure. When this attitude is assumed and closely maintained it can not fail to produce a cure, and thereby to substitute good sense for hallucination, joy for worry, security for fear, contentment for dread, hope

for despair, and enthusiasm for gloom. A childlike and loving trust in God's boundless goodness and infinite mercy will help the scrupulous person towards employing the indicated cure. St. Francis de Sales as a young man was terribly troubled with scruples, fears and thoughts of despair. With the help of prayer and his better judgment and his docile submissiveness to his confessor he soon conquered his trouble and regained his normal sensible self. Later on he got to be a famous and much sought spiritual guide who led many to extraordinary virtue and high sanctity. One of his main principles of spiritual guidance was: "If we have to trust either too much or too little in God, in a certain doubtful or perplexing case: it is always better we trust too much than too little."

"God Loveth a Cheerful Giver"

All pious and holy persons practically follow this principle, conscious as they are of God's fatherly love for them, and thereby they conceive and retain that spiritual buoyancy, hopefulness and exhilaration which are necessary for success in any department of endeavor; and in none more so than in the pursuit of virtue and the attainment of holiness. "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor., 9, 7). The process of a scrupulous person being cured by the afore-

said method is nicely and consolingly indicated by the words of St. Peter (1, 1, 6 sqq.): "You shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations: that the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe: and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Nature Is Good

To forestall scrupulosity effectively it is well to remember certain truths and principles. In the first place, there is nothing bad in nature. Whatever is created by God is of itself good. It only becomes bad when abused or misused for purposes not sanctioned by God. The human body, with all its organs and their natural functions, is good and pure. In a Christian it is sanctified through and through by the Sacrament of Baptism. God Himself dwells in every part of it. Hence the detailed care, cleanliness and health of the human body are perfectly in order and, when virtuously and sensibly pursued, they rather promote than hinder the purity of the mind and the chastity

of the heart. Whatever is necessary, therefore, in the way of inspecting, touching, handling and treating the body, by oneself or on the part of others, is entirely legitimate, and one need not entertain any silly or superstitious scruples with regard to it. Here a sound common sense and a healthy piety must prevail.

Lawful Curiosity

Moreover, there is a curiosity regarding the human body and its parts, and regarding the nature, the origin and the development of human life, which is entirely natural and, consequently, altogether lawful to young people in their adolescence. Certain physiological changes occur in their own bodies which mystify and perplex them, and they are eager to know the causes and purposes of them. They are fully entitled to this knowledge, provided they seek it from reliable and pure sources, namely from their parents or guardians, the boys from their fathers, and the girls from their mothers, or from books that are duly approved and trustworthy. Many moral disasters that happen to young people, through themselves or through cooperation with others, are due to sheer ignorance. Our Most Blessed Mother, the purest of the pure, as a maiden of sixteen or seventeen years, was evidently well acquainted with the laws governing the origin of human life, for,

upon being told by the angel that she was to be the Mother of God, she replied modestly: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" (Luke, 1, 34). Her own mother, St. Anne, had no doubt taught her all a growing young girl ought to know with reference to herself and life in general. Here the words of St. Paul come to mind: "All things are clean to the clean: but to them that are defiled, and to unbelievers, nothing is clean; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled" (Tit., 1, 15).

Sinful Curiosity

Of course, curiosity can and often does become excessive or inordinate, urging its subject to obtain a knowledge of sexual matters to which it is not entitled, or in a manner which is not justifiable. But even this curiosity is only a venial sin as long as it does not expose its subject to the proximate danger of sinning mortally against holy chastity, which it will unquestionably do if it is not curbed betimes. The loss of many an innocence, and the extinction of many a virtue, are traceable to undue and unrestrained curiosity in sexual matters. It is here particularly that curiosity likes to become morbid or unhealthy and, in consequence, fatal. Yet this does not militate in the least against the legitimate curiosity and

lawful knowledge everyone has a claim to according to his or her age, position or vocation in life. One who is studying to be a doctor or a nurse, for instance, has to be thoroughly conversant with many intimate details of the structure and the various functions of the human body; hence the virtuous pursuit and honorable acquisition of this knowledge is by no means wrong or objectionable, but, when done with a view of pleasing God, it is good and meritorious.

Vulgarity and Unchastity

While every fully deliberate sin of outright unchastity, whether done in thought, word or deed, is always a mortal sin, yet it is necessary carefully to distinguish between what is really unchaste and what is only coarse, vulgar, improper, or in bad taste. There are certain functions of nature, for example, which nature strongly prompts should be surrounded with strict privacy and secrecy, and vulgar references to which are very inelegant, which are yet not unchaste or obscene in the theological sense of the word; hence even the crude mentioning of or references to them in coarse jokes, stories and anecdotes are not to be classified as unchaste speech; or thoughts of them as indecent thoughts. For something to be unchaste, in other words, a sin against the sixth or ninth commandment, there must enter into

it a wilful sexual delight which the party in question has no right to enjoy, or, relatively, in impure speech to submit to the enjoyment of others. As long as the element of sex does not illegitimately enter into the matter somehow, there can not be question of impurity in the theological sense. It is not to be denied, however, that the coarseness and vulgarity alluded to above easily and not infrequently lead to actual indecency and, for this reason, they are often at least venially sinful.

"With God All Things Are Possible"

The preservation of chastity is neither easy nor ordinary. If it were, it would not receive such high commendations from God and from men. On the other hand it is neither superhuman nor heroic. Left to ourselves, none of us could achieve it; with the help of God, however, no one but can attain it. This is a case to which our Lord referred when He said: "With men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible" (Matt., 19, 26). To some temperaments, characters and dispositions chastity is harder than to others; again, in some environments, circumstances and vocations it is more difficult than in others: but whatever may be your personal condition, surroundings and vocational duties, so they are in themselves not sinful, the practice of chastity will be ren-

dered possible, yea sweet and delicious to you, if you make proper and constant use of the means God places at your disposal, viz., prayer, the continual remembrance of God's presence, the frequent worthy reception of the sacraments and attendance at Holy Mass, the reading of good books, the association and friendship with virtuous companions and, above all, the careful avoidance of the occasions of sin, such as immodest pictures, books, songs, theatres, dances, games, and the intercourse with immoral companions. An humble, frank and docile attitude towards your confessor will also be a great help.

The story of the Spanish savant is to the point. By over-study he had unbalanced his mind and fallen a victim to hallucinations. He was convinced, among other things, that he was completely made of glass; and in his converse with men he behaved accordingly. He was always afraid someone might touch him, and break his hand or his nose or his ear, made of glass, as he conceived them to be. Consequently he was careful to keep aloof from every danger. Spiritually, as to the protection of chastity, every pure person very wisely uses the same process, and behaves with the utmost caution with regard to the many and great dangers to purity, fearing contamination and

disaster. This is in keeping with the admonition of the Apostle: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God, and not of us" (2 Cor., 4, 7). Whoever ignores this wholesome precaution, and acts as though he or she were made of iron, and not of flesh and blood, and freely courts and defies every danger of immorality as though it did not exist for him or her, will be sure to fall, according to the words of the Bible: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus., 3, 27). From this law there is no evasion, and to this rule there never has been, there is not today, and there never will be an exception. The sooner and the more a young person is convinced of this, the better.

Yet, guard against them as we may, a number of more or less grievous temptations against holy purity will be sure to assail us sooner or later in life. Some doubtless originate from the devil, as the gospel warrants us in believing; while others are reducible to our very makeup and physical constitution. It is therefore not incorrect to say, that in the life of a normal and healthy person temptations to immodesty are not abnormal or unnatural. In fact, in view of the laws governing the reproduction of the human species, they are quite natural and fully to be expected. But whether they are

natural or preternatural, namely due to the influences of the devil, they are always conquerable with the grace of God and by human vigilance and self-control.

Flight Bespeaks Victory

According to all the Holy Fathers and Doctors and recognized spiritual writers of the Church, the best and often the only defense against impure temptations lies in flight. Here flight is not cowardice, but prudence, wisdom and virtue. One may successfully wrestle with and combat other temptations by direct and outright opposition and attack: but the temptations against purity, as well as those against faith—the two most delicate virtues—are best met and vanquished by being at once and definitely ignored. The sooner the imagination and the mind turn entirely away from them into other and honorable channels, the greater is the prospect of a virtuous and absolute victory.

It is inadvisable, therefore, not only directly to counteract and positively to fight against impure pictures, suggestions and emotions, but even to recall, for the examination of conscience, impure temptations in whatsoever guise or form. This recall, however well-intentioned it may be, often merely resuscitates the temptation and not infrequently accen-

tuates it to such a degree as to cause a real sin where before there was only an imaginary one. This applies to everybody, but particularly to scrupulous persons, of whom mention was made above.

Ignore Your Doubts

Doubts consequent upon impure temptations are by no means rare. All pious and God-loving persons experience them to their trial and wholesome humiliation. But in regard to them a virtuous and well-meaning person can always, with a good and safe conscience, take it for granted that, if he or she is not conscious of having committed a mortal sin, there was none committed. As long as there is in the mind a reasonable doubt regarding the matter, the subject can and ought to be dismissed at once without any further investigation whatever. Nor need or should it be ever again recalled in the examination of conscience, or mentioned in any way in confession. The less the person thinks or talks of it, the better and securer. All the laws of psychology are pitted against the presumption of sin in this case; hence this presumption must not deprive the mind of the peace and the heart of the joy to which they are entitled, but deserves to be relentlessly and finally ignored. In case there may have been some fault committed

in meeting the temptation in question, this fault will be atoned for and wiped out by an act of perfect love and contrition, which are known to be habitual to all God-fearing persons.

Temptation Itself Is Not Yet a Sin

In the spiritual life, if it is going to be a success at all, it is mandatory to remember, that there is every difference in the world between temptation and sin. A thousand fierce temptations do not make one venial sin. Temptations may go on with the greatest violence and unyielding insistence for years and years without eliciting a single venial sin from their subject. In the Life of St. Catherine we read, that for five whole years she was continuously haunted and harassed by the foulest and vilest temptations against purity. Because of their long duration she began to feel discouraged at times, fearing lest she consented in some degree, for otherwise they must long ago have ceased. Our Lord finally appeared to her in a vision. She complained to Him in her childlike manner, saying: "Lord, where wert Thou in this terrible storm of temptation?" And Jesus answered: "Catherine, I was in the very midst of your soul, in admiration and pleasure because of the way you were doing battle for Me."

It is good to remember this not only in the ordinary vexing temptations against the holy

virtue, but also in the more perplexing events of a sexual nature, such as violent and persistent immodest feelings or emotions, indecent dreams, unsolicited pollution and the like. As long as these incidents are involuntary in themselves and in their causes, so that the subject had no guilt whatever in bringing them on, and refuses to take a wilful delight in them, or deliberately to nurse them, they contain no sin at all, and their occurrence should cause no anxiety to the soul. Being natural in their origin and process, and consequently unavoidable, they are to be borne as every other disagreeable affliction of mind and body, with humble patience and trustful resignation to God; and then, instead of spelling misfortune and disaster, they will merely intensify and increase the subject's friendship with God, with a corresponding accumulation of heavenly merits and glory. As long as we are faithful, Jesus is in the midst of our souls, admiring, protecting, loving and blessing us.

The Three Stages Towards Sin

According to St. Gregory we can distinguish three stages in the commission of sin. The first stage is the sinful suggestion in some form or other. The second is a certain delight starting within the subject in response to the suggestion, and luring him or her towards com-

pliance with it. This is not yet a sin, but merely the reinforcement of the temptation which began in the first stage. The third stage is the consent of the will to the delight which the mind clearly knows to be sinful. This consent forms the sin. As long as it is refused or withheld, let the two others be ever so intense and prolonged, no sin is committed. And if either the knowledge of the mind, or the consent of the will, regarding the matter in question, were incomplete, than even with reference to chastity the sin was not mortal, but venial. Whilst no one can in reality be too conscientious in the maintenance of virtue, one may mistake scrupulosity for conscientiousness, and thereby go much awry.

Powerful Helps

The reasonably fervent pursuit of an honorable business or profession, a moderate indulgence in good sports and athletics, proper to one's sex and bodily constitution, and especially a taste for wholesome reading, particularly of history, biography, travels and current events, the company of pure-minded and noble associates, and a sensible care for the exercise, the health and cleanliness of the body are strong natural supports of the priceless virtue of holy purity.

CHAPTER VI.

Chastity

PART THREE

"If you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live" (*Rom.*, 8, 13).

THERE is no denying or circumventing the difficulties of chastity, but it is also unwise to over-emphasize them, whilst one at the same time minimizes or ignores not only the supernatural but also the natural benefits of chastity. Even from a merely natural standpoint it is far sweeter and more profitable to lead a chaste life than to be in the thralls of impurity. Every now and then you read of a young man or woman committing suicide after having hurled themselves headlong into the whirlpool of licentiousness and sensuality; but you never read of a young person ending his or her life through the misery of the mind and wretchedness of the heart brought on through the practice of purity and self-control. For physiological and psychic reasons alone a

sensible young person will keep the mind clean and the heart pure and the imagination away as much as possible from matters of sex. It is admittedly the only way of a comfortable, easy and happy human existence. Nothing gives one more satisfaction and joy than the complete control of one's passions. Whatever nature needs for its purposes in the sphere of the sexual life, will assert itself sufficiently and in due time without being wilfully evoked and wantonly nursed.

Samson

Of the swift and sad consequences of sexual softness and self-indulgence, followed by the cruel and relentless tyranny of sexual passion, we have a telling illustration in the history of Samson of old. As long as he had himself in possession and kept the secret of his strength, he conquered every enemy and instilled fear and terror in entire armies. But no sooner he succumbed to the lures and wiles of Dalila, she began to tie him with bands, indicative of his undoing. He tore them once; he tore them twice; he tore them three times. But the fourth time, when he awoke from his sleep, he noticed to his sorrow that the Lord had departed from him, and he fell into the hands of his enemies to serve as a clown at their feasts, as the butt of their ribald jests, and as a by-

word in their mouths. Similarly the young person that sacrifices his or her self-control and self-respect to indulge in fleshly pleasures exchanges the best and dearest things of life for a galling and most oppressive tyranny. Instead of being able, as Samson was before his fall, easily and triumphantly to sever and laugh at every bond or dominion of inferior nature, after weakly yielding to the siren call of lasciviousness once and again, in thought, imagination, desire, look, word, touch or action, the unfortunate young man or lady, ere becoming aware of it, is hopelessly and irrecoverably overpowered and enthralled by the vilest and cruelest tyranny of lust; and only then he or she awakens to the realization that the Lord has departed, and with Him everything that was worth while in life, namely, spiritual liberty and personal self-assertion, and all the precious qualities associated with them.

In view of this we are not surprised that many non-Catholics, independently of any religious considerations, from a mere interest in their personal comfort and well-being, and from an instinctive appreciation of modesty as a strong factor towards self-control and self-possession, and towards consequent happiness, ease and contentment, aim to keep their minds pure and their hearts chaste. They love power, the best and most flattering and satisfying

power there is: the mastery over themselves. And their native good sense tells them, that this mastery will be entirely out of question, unless they rigidly check and hold a severe and unrelenting guard over their sensuous leanings and sexual appetites.

Are You Sad?

The reading of these chapters on chastity may have served to depress and discourage you, for possibly you have already become a slave of the vice of impurity, with yourself or with others and, although you are wincing under the humiliating tyranny of it, you do not feel strong enough to extricate yourself from its bonds and to recover your former liberty and moral power. Despising yourself for your weakness and imbecility, you moan plaintively, saying with St. Paul: "Unhappy man [woman] that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer is contained in the exhilarating words that follow: "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom., 7, 24, 25). And this applies to every form of impurity, none excepted, with yourself or with others.

It was through prayer that Samson recovered his lost strength. "He called upon the Lord, saying: O Lord God, remember me, and restore to me now my former strength, O my

God, that I may revenge myself on my enemies. . . . And he killed many more at his death, than he had killed before in his life" (Judges, 16, 28, 30). Through fervent and insistent prayer your lost strength of self-control will return to you and help you achieve greater moral victories than you ever achieved before you fell.

St. Augustine

Do not hesitate, therefore, by a resolute decision to respond to God's grace and put an end to your spiritual slavery and wretchedness. The longer you dally, halt and waver, the weaker your will, the stronger your passion, and the viler your servitude become. As a young man St. Augustine was held captive in the fetters of public and disgraceful impurity. He was a proud spirit and felt terribly humbled and broken through his shameful weakness. He wanted to rid himself of it and assert his manhood and independence. But in his slavery he groaned, saying: "Not today, but tomorrow." When the morrow came he always felt weaker than the day before. Until one day, when he chanced to read of saintly men who had conquered themselves heroically for the love of God and the salvation of their souls, he exclaimed: "If they could do it, why can not I do it?" He mustered courage and followed

their example and became a great saint of God. "Go, and do thou in like manner" (Luke, 10, 37).

Confession

You may be saying, however: "If I could only get my conscience in order through a good confession, and be reasonably sure that all my past sins are forgiven, and my soul was clean before God, I should not find it hard to resolve upon a life of purity henceforth; for I am thoroughly tired of and disgusted with this filthy sin, and with the grace of God I feel satisfied I shall not find it difficult to quit and shun it forever. But how to confess duly all the terrible sins of the past: that is the point. I am at a loss how to go about it. If I only knew how to say it all, I should not shrink from a complete and sincere confession, for I deserve to be abashed and humiliated after all I have done against my God and Savior."

Once a person is through with sin and eager to return to and cling to God forever in chastity and righteousness, the telling of the sins to the priest in the confessional ought to create no difficulty. Recall your sins to the best of your ability, as to their nature, substantial circumstances and their exact or approximate number, and with all modesty and delicacy say, as the case may be, adding the number and necessary

circumstances: "Father, since my last worthy confession which was . . . , I have sinned by immodest thoughts—desires—looks—touches upon myself—self-abuse . . . ; I have sinned by indecent conversations—obscene acts with others, of the same or the opposite sex—with animals . . . .

Explicit and Comprehensive: Yet Delicate

Sins with others may be mere touches or passionate and immodest kisses or other familiarities; or they may consist in mutual self-abuse, or complete sexual intercourse. These differences ought to be mentioned, not with any crude or gross description of detail, but in a way that the priest understands the nature of the sin committed. Sexual intercourse between single or celibate people is called fornication. If one or both are married (to another party), it is adultery. If they are closely related, though not married to each other, it is incest. Unnatural sexual relation between persons of the same sex, or of the opposite sex, is called sodomy. Sexual transgression with an animal is bestiality.

In confessing sins of impurity the penitent must aim to be as delicate and proper in his language as possible. As was hinted above, it is neither necessary nor advisable to go into descriptive details of a vulgar character in

mentioning sexual sins. Nor should coarse or indelicate expressions be employed. The grossest sins of impurity can and should be told in a refined and unobjectionable manner. Just so the priest understands the nature and necessary circumstances and number of the sins perpetrated, the confession is complete. In addition to that, the less minutiae or details, the better. The sacredness of the sacrament demands this consideration of reverence and modest caution.

If these sins have been committed habitually during a certain period, it is sufficient to mention the length of the period and say how often they were done each day, week, month or year. If one is at a loss as to how to tell this ugly tale of sin, it is advisable to begin by humbly asking the priest for his assistance. The recital will usually be found to be much easier than was anticipated.

The Priest Appears Shocked

In case the priest appears to be shocked and rather brusque and hard in the face of the penitent's lurid story, his attitude only has the purpose of testing the sincerity of the penitent's disposition, and of impressing the penitent with the gravity of the sins, so he or she will in future be set against them forever. Whenever the priest is fully convinced, that the penitent

for the love of God thoroughly hates the sins he or she confesses and is definitely done with them, he can not but be consoled and rejoice in his heart, and harbor for the penitent sentiments of the deepest appreciation, honor and respect.

If the priest feels you did not satisfy the obligation of confession and explain yourself sufficiently, he will ask of you whatever further information may be necessary. Answer his questions without excitement and perturbation of mind. He puts them to you not from curiosity, much less to bewilder or abash you, but merely from a sense of duty, to make sure that you are properly disposed to receive the absolution he is most eager to give you, no sooner he is satisfied you are worthy of it. No priest enjoys asking questions in the confessional, and least of all with reference to sexual weaknesses. But at times the priest would be a renegade to his sacred trust and conducive to a soul's perdition, if he did not ask certain questions relative to the penitent's state of conscience; even as the physician of the body would often bungle a case and cause great discomfiture to a patient, and perhaps even inflict death indirectly, if he did not make certain inquiries of a delicate nature at the diagnosis. And if you want to ask the priest a question of conscience, do not hesitate to do it.

Human Nature Is Uniform

You are not the only one who are asked certain questions in the confessional, even as you are not the only one who has to tell certain sins in the confessional. Whatever you have to say, the priest has already heard before. In fact he no doubt has heard things much worse than those you have to confess; and he will hear more of them as he continues in his sacred ministry. Human nature is very much alike everywhere and at all times, and it befalls the lot of the priest to see its weakest and vilest side in the confessional. You can be sure, then, that you will not show him a new and undiscovered phase of it that will shock and perturb him and throw him off his balance; as little as you would expect, if you went to a medical doctor, to acquaint him with a new and unheard of disease by revealing the symptoms of yours. Do not hesitate, therefore, to make a clean breast of your life's story to God's representative in the confessional. The more the humble and candid telling of it hurts, crushes and effaces your sinful self, the more likely will you be to experience within yourself the boon bestowed upon the leper in the gospel. "And there came a leper to Him [Jesus], beseeching Him, and kneeling down said to Him: If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus having compassion on

him, stretched forth His hand; and touching him, said to him: I will. Be thou made clean. And when He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean" (Mark, 1, 40-42).

The Glories of Virginity

No doubt some of my readers, who aim to lead a life of holy virginity either in the cloister or in the world as long as they live, are interested in the particular glories and rewards of virginity. Maybe they have been spiritually unfortunate and have lapsed against the holy virtue either with themselves or others. In consequence they are wondering if through these lapses they have forfeited the dignity and honor of virginity; or, in case they have lost their virginity, if it can be recovered somehow and, if so, in what manner. There are good girls who are so abashed, discouraged and depressed by their past transgressions, that they feel altogether unworthy of posing as virgins at all in any capacity; hence they shrink from asking for admission into the convent, since they know they are no longer virgins, and often they even hesitate to accept an honorable offer of marriage, since they feel they were deceiving their prospective husband if they assumed the attitude of a virgin before him and before God at the sacred ceremony of marriage.

The theologians teach that three classes of people will be especially distinguished in heaven. Outside of the glory common to all the saints, they will enjoy a particular mark of God's benevolence by which they will be singled out from among all other saints. These three classes will be the martyrs, the doctors of the Church, and the virgins. This preference emphasizes what a high place virginity holds in God's estimation. And, of course, what is said here of virginity, applies to the one sex as well as to the other without any difference whatsoever.

The Loss of Virginity

This precious treasure of virginity is lost, however, through one complete sexual sin, either of intercourse with one of the other sex, or of wilful self-abuse. Once lost, is it ever possible to recover the honor and rewards of virginity? The Church has made no declaration on this head. But St. Augustine, one of the greatest doctors of the Church, who in his youth was guilty of shameful excesses of impurity, says a comforting word when he declares, that virginity which has been lost may be recovered by a long practice of chastity. In the life of St. Margaret of Cortona, the St. Mary Magdalen of the Order of St. Francis, we

read an incident which adds strength to this doctrine of St. Augustine.

After her conversion from a hideous and scandalous life of immorality, our Lord was not slow in drawing her closer and closer to Himself by the bonds of divine love. The stronger and dearer their holy friendship and union grew, the more tender and familiar were the names which Jesus called Margaret. At first He called her His dear little sheep which He had found again; then in loving gradation He called her His child, His daughter, His beloved, and finally, His spouse, assuring her at the same time, that her place in heaven would be among the virgins, whose glory she would share. There is, whatever may be its theological value or non-value, a great deal of real comfort and genuine encouragement in this sweet legend for every God-loving soul who has been unfortunate after the manner of Margaret, but who like her wants to give whatever remains of her love and devotion entirely and forever to Jesus, the pure Lover of penitent as well as of innocent virgins. And does the doctrine of St. Augustine not receive a great deal of weight also from the consoling fact, that there stood beneath at the Cross of Jesus, as He was dying upon it, not only Mary, the spotless one, but immediately next to her

also Mary, the penitent one, as His divine Blood oozed down from the Cross for your sins and for mine?

"A Friend of Publicans and Sinners"

Consequently, if our Lord Himself did not disdain to have a penitent virgin, if I may use this term, as one of the main spectators and attendants at His death, and as the second witness to His resurrection, no religious order that is imbued with His spirit will exclude from its fold the unfortunate souls who have sinned, but who have washed away all their sins through the Blood of the Lamb. And what applies to the entrance into the convent applies similarly to the reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders or matrimony, respectively, on the part of those who have sinned but have duly repented. Of course, if the sins in question have not remained private and hidden, but have become known with consequent shame and disgrace to the subject of them, this person will naturally be excluded from the convent or the sanctuary, as the case may be; and this for the sake of the good name of the religious or priestly life which has to be maintained at all costs. Yet even in this case a sincere and sufficiently long and public reparation of the scandal given would qualify a person for reception in the religious or priestly life.

Never to Have Sinned Is Sweetest

After all, sweet as is the forgiveness of sin on the part of God for the poor victim of impurity, the consciousness of never having seriously violated holy chastity and virginity, thanks to God's grace, is a feeling infinitely more soothing and delicious. Mary Magdalen was happy for having been pardoned by Jesus after her fall. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was unspeakably happier for never having sullied her innocence and purity by the least shadow of sin. If it is too late for you to be happy after the manner of Mary Immaculate, do your best to be happy after the manner of Mary the Penitent. But if your innocence is still unseared, let your one ambition in life be the eulogy which God pronounced upon Mary: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant., 4, 7).

One of the best means to keep on deserving this grand eulogy either for innocence preserved, or for innocence regained through penance, is the constant practice of an ardent love and a tender devotion to Mary, who invites all sincere lovers of purity saying: "Come to me, all ye that desire me. I am the Mother of fair love . . . In me is all grace, . . . all hope of life, and of virtue" (Ecclus., 24, 24-26).

CHAPTER VII.

The Prodigal Son

> "*He that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting*" (*Gal.*, 6, 8).

NO ONE knows the psychology of youth as well and as thoroughly as Jesus Christ knows it. In the gospel our Lord gives us only one instance of a young person going wrong. He describes the case in detail and very graphically. It is interesting, therefore, to learn to what motives the divine Master of psychology ascribes the wreck of a young life, and to follow the sad process of it from beginning to end. No young person but can derive a most wholesome lesson for his or her own life from the pathetic story.

And lest the moral of this instructive story might be unduly restricted to the masculine sex alone, our Savior exhibited a counterpart of it in Mary Magdalen. It is remarkable that the only girl to whom Jesus is said to have forgiven her sins was one who went wrong morally. If a

young person stays morally pure, she usually remains good all round.

"A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called

thy son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life again; was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke, 15, 11 sqq.).

The Cause of His Downfall

It is not without deep and striking significance, that our Lord has this young man to be plunged into misery through the passion of impurity. The brother of the boy indicated this when he said upon the young man's return: "This thy son, who hath devoured his substance with harlots" (ib., 30). Impurity in some form or other is the source of the downfall of most young persons whose life is wrecked. The prodigal son was the younger of the two boys. This, too, is worthy of note. It emphasizes the dangers of early youth. It has been said that, if a young person does not yield to sensuous excesses before the twentieth year, there will be little danger of ever succumbing to them later on. The early years, the teens, are the perilous years.

How did the young man get his start on the slippery and fatal road of impurity? In other words, how did the filthy passion possess him

in the first place? No doubt through evil associations. Companions who were already corrupt began to tell him stories he should have never heard. They acquainted his young and immature mind with indecent sexual information, filled his fancy with obscene images, and inflamed his youthful heart with immodest desires. They showed him unchaste pictures, offered him impure literature, led him into lewd theatres and gradually to the dens of open and shameless vice, licentiousness and profligacy. The transition from the one grade of obscenity to the other was as swift as it was stealthy, and before he himself realized it he was a hopeless victim of sordid vice and tyrannical passion. This would have never happened if he had been frank and candid with his father, and heeded the paternal counsels and directions as to the company he kept and the amusements he frequented. He acted under cover, furtively and insincerely, to the loss of his peace of mind, his manliness and self-respect, honor and self-control. He is a striking example of the truth, that in a young man or young lady, personal impurity is usually associated with disobedience, reticence and coldness to parents.

A Changed Person

Within a short time the young man was a changed person. He had a nice and happy

home: he began to grow tired of it. He had a generous and splendid father: he conceived an aversion for him. The family's manner of living was easy, calm and comfortable: he began to hate it. He wanted liberty, independence, license. He yearned for thrills, sensations and excitement. The more his home surroundings seemed to bar him from wild romance and adventures, because of its discipline, method and order, the more he detested the restraint, and longed to be delivered from it at any cost, the sooner the better.

Passion is selfish, hard and cruel. It has no regard for the rights or feelings of others, and is unconcerned about the claims of conscience, honor and gratitude. Just so it is gratified to the limit, it cares not who suffers or what is ruined. And no passion seems to be less sensitive to considerations for others than the passion of impurity. The Prodigal Son illustrates this vividly in his conduct. He had the impertinence to ask his aged father for his portion of the inheritance before he had any claim to it. He could not wait until it fell due through the death of his father. This death was coming too slow for him, it seemed, and in his frenzy he anticipated the effects of it.

His Father's Pet

No doubt his father, whose pet he obviously was for being his younger son, remonstrated with him in a kindly, fatherly, yet earnest manner. He said pleadingly: "Why are you in such a hurry to leave me? Am I not doing all I can to give you a convenient and happy home? I shall not last much longer. My hands tremble, my hair is bleached, my figure is beginning to stoop towards the grave, and my days will soon be numbered. Stay with me, therefore, until I die. I have always counted on you to be the staff, the joy and the consolation of my declining years. How sad and lonely I shall be once you depart from me, perhaps never to return to me again! Stay with me yet a little while; then you can bury me, and take your portion of your inheritance to do with it as you like."

In Passion's Thralls

But the young man was too far gone in passion to pay attention to and acquiesce in his father's desires. He remained cold and insensible. Nothing could move him from his determination to fly from his home and the parental authority, that he might have his vicious fling unchecked and undisturbed. The old father's tears were shed in vain; his pleadings were idle; his remonstrances futile; passion

gripped his son's heart and shut it to every other appeal. How often is not this sad story repeated in the case of Catholic young men and women, who allow themselves to be beguiled into some dangerous amour, usually threatening to end in an unhappy marriage, and inducing them to hurl themselves into misery in utter disregard of the counsels and the tenderest sentiments of their parents! They will treat father and mother with cold indifference and black ingratitude, and sever all amicable relations with them forever rather than restrain their savage and suicidal passion. Formerly they never dreamed they could assume so barbarous an attitude towards their good and kindly parents: but once in the power of unholy passion they are carried far beyond themselves in the face of their better knowledge and softer nature. Here are verified the words of our Lord to Peter, though in a different sense: "Amen I say to thee, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not" (John, 21, 18). To preclude this slavery and tyranny the only method is to keep one's self in control at all times, and scrupulously to retain the mastery over one's sensuous passions. The most spir-

ited horse is easily curbed and nicely guided by bit and bridle: without them, however, it runs to its own and its rider's death. Obedience to and love of parents are one of the strongest preventives against impurity and its unspeakable ravages.

Out of Sight

How disgusted the young man was with his home and his father he disclosed by going "abroad into a far country". He wanted to get away from them altogether and forever, so that even the thought or remembrance of them would never recur to him again. He was through with them once and for all, goaded as he was to the utmost aversion for them by his vile passion of lechery, the free course and indulgence of which they had impeded, as was their sacred duty. This conduct of the prodigal son illustrates the extreme estrangement of many Catholic young people from their Church, the home of their soul, and from their God. Under the whip of their wicked passion they soon break all connections with them and get as far away from them in their thoughts and feelings as possible, with a mind never again to resume relations with them as long as they live. They never more want to be reminded of them. Alas, they, too, go abroad into a far country. And often the

passage from their home to it is achieved in an astoundingly short time. Saints today, sinners tomorrow. Dutiful children today, unnatural and inhuman children tomorrow. So swift, complete and weird is the transformation achieved by unholy passion, once it is given admission into the heart of a young person

In the record of the Prodigal's sinful course no mention is directly made of drunkenness. A sufficient implication is made of it however, when he is said to have lived riotously and spent his substance with harlots. Most of the young men who allow themselves to be introduced to fallen women, owe their first lethal introduction to them to drink. And it is drink, too, that leads them to keep on frequenting the dens of vice and to sink lower and lower in depravity until they hit the very bottom of animal indulgence; yea, until they surpass in bestiality the very brutes of the field.

A large number of girls, too, who are seduced into the loss of their purity, owe their first serious lapse to intemperance; and ere they are conscious of it, pure and innocent though they were before, they begin to live riotously, and soon renounce every sense of womanly delicacy, virtue and honor. And for both young men and women the passion of gambling is usually another deadly feature of their riotous living.

The Automobile

What has been said of the disastrous effects and nameless ravages of drink with reference to purity, is true in an equal, if not in a greater degree, of the free and indiscriminate riding in automobiles on the part of young people. The automobile has conferred many and great benefits upon mankind, but the prolongation of human life is not one of them. No engine of destruction of human life has ever been so constant and frequent in its deadly operation as the automobile. But fatal as the automobile is to human longevity, it is immensely more fatal to the morality of society in general and especially to the innocence and goodness of girls.

It has well been said, that the onetime saloons in their worst days were not nearly so destructive of virtue as the automobile is today. Good girls would not venture near them for fear of losing caste and honor. But the girls of today continue to be looked upon as respectable, even though they venture on a ride with a man or young man unchaperoned, the result of which ride is to them often more disastrous than physical death itself. It is incontestably true, that the demon of impurity has in the automobile his most powerful agent, his most successful accomplice and his most insidious procurer. Eternal vigilance and cau-

tion, springing from a wholesome fear, together with a prudent chaperonage, are the best safeguards against the moral perils of the automobile for young men and young women. One injudicious ride has ruined many a girl's existence and blasted her happiness for life.

"Who Hesitates Is Lost"

In this phase of pleasure a wise and virtuous girl never risks anything without the counsel and consent of her parents regarding the car, the chauffeur and the company. The girl who indiscreetly entrusts her virtue, safety and life to a stranger or chance acquaintance, without the proper safeguards, fully deserves whatever sad fate awaits her. The stranger, who invites a girl to a ride without the proper introduction and guaranty of decorum, usually has the vilest designs upon the unsuspecting maiden and, to satisfy for a brief moment his selfish bestial passion, he will not hesitate to plunge her and leave her forever in unnameable wretchedness and moral destitution. Here the saying holds: "The girl who hesitates (in declining this suggestive and vicious invitation) is lost."

You would not dream of ever entrusting a precious diamond or a wallet of money to a complete stranger; why then be tempted at all to confide what is infinitely more valuable: your virtue, your good name, your happiness

and your very life to a man of whom you know nothing? What stupidity and fatuity could equal this? Let the sorry and fatal experiences of many unsuspecting girls be a wholesome lesson to you. To be forewarned means to be forearmed.

Social Disease

Another thing that is remarkable in the Prodigal's story, is that he escaped being diseased in the body. After his converse with wicked women he was fortunate, indeed, in not having been permanently infected with a loathsome and contagious disease. Many a young man, for one short sinful enjoyment with a bad woman, is ruined not only in virtue and honor, but also in his bodily health for life. Maybe he is visited with partial or total paralysis at once or very soon, or the foul disease hides in his blood to break out variously in his body as time goes on, to his shame and torment, and to serve as a most humiliating drain of his hard-earned money. Often there is no cure; and frequently the cure is questionable, exposing the unhappy patient to the danger of infecting others and transmitting the leprous and deadly contagion to his future wife and children and his children's children. This is a terrible price to pay for one dishonorable and sinful delight. Every young man, there-

fore, will take to heart and follow the words of the Bible: "My son, . . . mind not the deceit of a woman . . . Her [the harlot's] feet go down into death, and her steps go in as far as hell. . . . Let not thy mind be drawn away in her ways: neither be thou deceived with her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded, and the strongest have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, reaching even to the inner chambers of death" (Prov., chapt. 5 and 7). And what has here been said of the tremendous risk taken by a reckless young man in sinning with a bad woman, applies with equal force to the thoughtless and frivolous girl who weakly or wantonly surrenders her virtue to the tempter just once. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom., 6, 23).

The Cruel Disappointment

The young man's glowing dreams and rosy prospects with reference to his life of licentiousness and abandon were not long in being terribly disappointed and ruthlessly blasted. Vice, particularly, is far more pleasant in anticipation than in realization. After a short fling of license and lewdnesss the young man's money was gone, and with his money disappeared all his friends and boon companions. He was in great distress and was soon reduced to utter misery; so much so that he had to

resort to a means of living which, especially to a Jew, was most humiliating and disgraceful: the feeding of swine. And in his biting hunger he even envied the very swine for the husks they were eating, and which were being denied to him.

This sad story of the sudden and deep fall of a fine young man was told almost two thousand years ago. Human nature, and the nature and consequences of impurity have not changed since. Young persons today, who surrender themselves unrestrained to a life of impurity are sure to be overcome by the sad fate of the Prodigal sooner or later. If not all their money and the means of making what is called a decent living, they soon lose what is more precious than money: their reputation, their health—frequently for life—their peace of mind, their self-respect and self-confidence, and their standing with Almighty God. The drop from their former religious and moral prestige, from their previous esteem of and trust in self, unto unmanly or unwomanly softness and moral impotency evokes in them feelings of cutting and crushing disillusionment and of desperate self-reproach. They are, in common parlance, altogether down and out: shorn of all self-assertiveness, forsaken by men, and abandoned by God.

The Prodigal Deserves Praise

The young man of our Lord's story has to be given credit for realizing his unfortunate situation as soon as he did, and for the wise and sensible manner in which he cast about for an escape from it. He began to institute a comparison between his former happiness and his present misery; his former honor and his present dishonor; his former popularity and his present dereliction. The meanest servant in his father's house was abounding with bread, whilst he was starving. Why such a tremendous difference? and why not put an end to it at once? He admitted that he alone was the cause of his wretchedness. He blamed no one but himself. Just so he himself would do the right thing, he was convinced matters would again adjust themselves in his favor. He lost no time in getting himself to do it. "I will arise," he said, "and will go to my father." And, what was still more to his credit, he actually arose at once, and proceeded to make an humble confession of guilt and a contrite request for forgiveness to his father. In a word, he was willing to take his punishment and his medicine with an aim at his recovery and restoration.

If You Have Followed Him in Sin, Imitate His Penance

Whoever have followed the Prodigal Son in his lascivious wandering from home should not hesitate, no sooner they realize the mistake they have made, to follow him in his return to his father. They must arise from their filth at once, without a moment's delay, for every delay but makes the rising harder and threatens to impede it forever. They must have every confidence in the love, goodness and forgiveness of their heavenly Father, and every trust in His help towards their perseverance in penance and virtue. If the Prodigal Son, who had sunk so low in nameless vice and depravity, could rise so quickly and permanently, it will not be impossible to them. Our Lord told His touching story mainly to bring home to all sinners without exception, but especially to the victims of impurity, that they could always shake off the shackles of whatsoever sin and habits of sin with the assistance of His grace, provided they corresponded with it in due time and in the right manner. They must not shrink from the hardships of the return to their spiritual home, nor from the sincere and sorrowful confession of sin to the priest, the delegate of their celestial Father, for these hardships are not nearly so severe in reality as the imagination of the timid sinner is prone to picture them.

Groundless Fears

On his way home the Prodigal Son had studied his confession carefully and rehearsed it painstakingly. He was wondering how he would get through with it, and how it would be met by his father. His fears, lest his reception might be formal, ceremonious, cold, embarrassing and humiliating, as he really deserved it should be, proved to be idle and groundless. His father was more desirous of a reunion and more eager for the reestablishment of the sweet and loving relations of yore than the son himself. And when he saw his son approach in the distance, he hastened towards him, embraced him and kissed him, and thereby rendered his confession easy, delicious and sweet. It was a relief for the errant boy to say from the depths of his soul: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son." His father did not let him say more. He had said enough. He was fully and finally forgiven. He became the object of sweeter parental love and greater honor than he had ever received.

This is the experience enjoyed in the confessional by all sincere and contrite sinners, who hearten themselves to break with sin at any cost, not excepting the heavy and difficult sacrifice of their pride and vanity, through an

humble recital of their sins. Hard as they fear this is going to be for them, and much as they dread the reception that may be in store for them on the part of the priest, they no sooner enter the confessional and exhibit a genuine disposition to receive the sacrament, when the priest warms towards them in deep pity and true sympathy, and takes away every sting from the confession, and renders it soothing, consoling and bracing for the penitents.

The Rewards of Penance

And as the father of the Prodigal Son at once restored him again to his former standing in the family, and even showered upon him greater favors, and caused him intenser joy, and made him feel more at home than ever before, so God immediately rehabilitates the repentant sinner fully and finally, draws him closer to Himself, and confers greater spiritual joys and bounties upon him after his return than before his wanderings. "I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance" (Luke, 15, 7).

Because of this hearty and loving reception he got from his father and, too, because of his bitter experience of the life of licentiousness,

the Prodigal Son was never again tempted to leave his home and his father to go out on questionable adventures and shady maneuvres. He was through with sin forever. He had enough of it. His one aim in life after his return was, how to eliminate entirely the remembrance of his sins from his mind. Their very recollection was a torture. Here again he is a splendid example for all repentant sinners who, after an indulgence in mental or bodily orgies of unchastity, have been reclothed by God with the robe of innocence, and given the ring of His friendship and love. The goodness and graciousness of God in their behalf, together with the bitter remembrance of their life in sin, ought to be sufficient to attach them to Him in inseparable love and everlasting loyalty. This the more, when they reflect how many prodigals leave home never to return, but die in their misery and despair.

Wholesome Reflections

The story of the Prodigal Son, then, must convince every victim of impurity first, that no one can sink so low in vice and passion as not to be able to return to purity and to God at once, with the help of God's grace; and second, that a life of constant and enduring chastity is possible to every repentant sinner whatever his previous habits of sin may have

been, provided he trusts in and faithfully corresponds with God's help. The devil uses no more insidious and disastrous ruse than when he aims to convince a young man or woman, before or after a fall into the sin of unchastity, that a pure and chaste life is impossible and hopeless of maintenance. It was mainly to convince every young person of the contrary, that Jesus told His wondrous story.

Still, in the end, sweet and entrancing as was the return of the Prodigal Son for himself and his father, after the banquet and the merry-making of the reception were done, and he had leisure to ponder over his entire experience, the repentant young man no doubt bemoaned his reckless conduct as long as he lived. He never ceased blaming himself for having caused so much needless anxiety and bitter grief to so good a father. He wished again and again he had never left his home in the way he did. He envied his elder brother for his irreproachable record much more than his brother had envied him for the glad and joyous reception tendered him at his return. In the just and filial appraisal of his mind, now that all was past, he would gladly have foregone the cordial reception for the balmy consciousness never to have erred and caused grief to his father and disgrace to his home and dishonor to his name.

Baptismal Innocence from the Cradle to the Grave

This reflection should hearten all those of my readers whose baptismal innocence is still untarnished and whose purity of heart is yet unsoiled. Whatever lure the temptations of the flesh and the world may have for them, and however they feel they might be pleased for being received again into the graces of God after forsaking Him through sin, they must be out and out convinced that no sweetness of penance, and no joy of return to God, can ever be compared in deliciousness to the ecstatic consciousness of never having forsaken God, and of never having sullied the baptismal robe of innocence, and the angelic garb of purity by one serious lapse. It is possible, as was insisted on before, after whatsoever lapses against purity to resume and maintain forever a life of unstained chastity and faultless modesty: but this life is immensely easier to the person whose courage and self-reliance have never been weakened by ignominious defeat and inglorious surrender, and whose trust and confidence in God have been increased and reinforced by ceaseless victories over sin and relentless triumphs over passion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Vocation

"Everyone hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that.—Brethren, let every man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God" (1 *Cor.*, 7, 7, 24).

THIS life is a stage upon which we are all destined to play a certain brief sketch or role. Our parts have been assigned us by God, the supreme manager and director of the play of life. The best actors on the theatrical stage are usually eminent and highly successful in one manner of play, whereas they might fail completely if they attempted another. Similarly God has fitted and qualified each person for a peculiar sphere of life. Whoever adopts the life he is created for, and pursues it properly and fervently, will achieve great success and much happiness; whereas if one seeks to follow a life for which he is not adapted, he will necessarily incur disappointment and failure. Many a plant thrives wonderfully in the tropic zone, which is pitifully dwarfed and stunted in the temperate or arctic zone. In the same way

many a person prospers immensely in a given vocation, who would be the merest bungler in another calling.

One of the Three Is Yours: Which Is It?

It is evident, therefore, that if a young person wants to succeed and be happy in life and in eternity, the first requisite is the correct choice of a vocation. Here we are dealing with vocation from the spiritual and supernatural standpoint; hence only three kinds of vocation come under consideration. A young person may be called by God either to lead a single life in the world, or to consecrate him or herself to God in the priesthood or the religious life, or to be married. One of these three roles is fixed by God for everyone; and it is in the interest of every young person to find out his or her calling early in life, in order to prepare duly for it betimes, and thus to be the better qualified to play the role once the time comes to assume it.

Many young people are destined by God to lead a single or celibate life in the world. Some have no inclination to the convent or matrimony, or no capacity for either life; others, much as they might be inclined to marry, are constrained by circumstances to stay single, either because they do not acquire a proper mate, or because certain personal or family

conditions are in the way; others pursue the single state from definite choice as offering them the opportunities to dedicate themselves to a high career and noble ambition in a free and untrammeled manner.

The Relative Values of Vocations

The Church has declared, that the single, or celibate, or virginal life, when embraced and followed from motives of virtue, is in itself holier and more acceptable before God than life in marriage, since it involves a greater sacrifice of oneself. It must be observed, however, that the Church does not here decide the respective virtue of individual persons pertaining to the two states. It therefore happens quite frequently, that a married person faithfully lives up to the duties of the married state, and is much better in the sight of God than a celibate or virgin, whose devotion to duty is not so loyal. There are married women who are more holy than certain nuns, and married men who are more godly than certain priests or friars: but this fact in no way changes the relative status of the vocations. The priesthood and the religious state are of themselves much dearer to God than the married state. It must again be remarked, that whoever stays single merely to be unattached to any serious obligation, and to pursue a life

of libertinism freely and loosely, in the open or in private, is neither practicing virtue nor deserving of anything but utter contempt and universal execration.

It Is No One Else's Business

Why a certain person is leading the life of a celibate or a virgin in the world is no one else's business. Vocation is a very personal and individual affair, and therefore a sacred domain into which others have no right to intrude. It bespeaks not a little arrogance and impertinence, if one undertakes to dictate to another what kind of a vocation he or she should espouse, or asks for an account why one calling was given the preference to another. Not even parents have a right to map out, let alone to interfere with, the choice of a vocation on the part of their children. In this choice everyone is free and responsible to no one but God. But while parents might cause great trouble and disaster to their children by an unwarranted assumption of power regarding the children's choice of a vocation, or by wielding an undue influence over them directly or indirectly, they can also be of much service and material assistance to their children by their wise and unselfish counsel and advice.

Bachelors

Young men, it seems, are not so frequently as girls given a vocation to the single life in the world. It may not be without significance in this connection, that after God created man He said: "It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself" (Gen., 2, 18.) He did not say: "It is not good for woman to be alone," after He created her. At any rate, it appears that woman does better in the single life in the world than does man. Aside from the young men who become priests or friars or religious brothers, some single men do very well in every way, whether they remain bachelors from mere choice, or because they want to devote themselves unhindered to the welfare of a parent or some other close relative that may require their care, or to some other charitable, professional, or artistic pursuit. Their sacrifice is frequently as heroic as their virtue is saintly, much as they and their motives may be misunderstood and maliguantly misconstrued by those, who are not only incapable of high unselfishness themselves, but also can not conceive others as practicing it. As a rule, however, unless there is a strong reason militating against it, a young man does better and prospers more in every way, if in due time he marries a good Catholic girl, than if in indecision and vacillation he toddles

along from day to day into irresolute and shiftless bachelordom. In other words, to the majority of young men growing into manhood the words apply: "It is not good for man to be alone."

Too Many Bachelors

Many of our Catholic bachelors—without reflecting upon anyone in particular, for the reasons stated above—would consult their own general growth, prosperity and happiness, and the welfare of society at large, if they ended their aimless bachelordom and took a good Catholic girl unto themselves as their helpmate in holy marriage. It would give their life a distinct purpose and a concrete ambition; it would animate and stimulate them to high endeavor; it would render them solidly and substantially happy: in a word it would make their life worth living, and fulfill in their case the aim of God in creating woman to be a helpmate to man.

Of course, once married, man is to be as much a helpmate to woman as woman is to him, for this service is bilateral, mutual and correlative without distinction or discrimination. But woman seems not to need the help of man for a good and contented life quite as much as a man needs the help of woman. In my own experience in the priesthood I have had

men, who married late in life, delaying marriage more from indecision than any other cause, to tell me that they regretted keenly not having married many years sooner. If they only had known how much a good wife meant to them, they would not have dilly-dallied so long in making up their mind in marrying one. Often God can not give a bachelor a greater and more consequential grace than the efficient inclination to court and win a good girl as his wife. "He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing, and shall receive a pleasure from the Lord" (Prov., 18, 22).

Maiden Ladies

Owing chiefly to economic reasons, and to a material change of woman's status in public life, the number of girls pursuing the single life in the world has increased much in late years. Nowadays a woman who remains unmarried is not the object of condescending pity or ill-concealed ridicule she once was, for the world knows she is quite able to take proper care and to give a good account of herself, and that she is usually more in a position to help others than to require assistance, and is consequently oftener envied than pitied; which is as it should be. Girls remain single from various reasons. Many do not care to marry. They have never had the least desire for matrimony. The best

offers and the most enticing prospects of marriage leave them indifferent and unresponsive.

Even as our Blessed Mother Mary they have had a strong inclination to a life of holy virginity from their very childhood. In the beginning of their life our Lord wooed them, so they might reserve all their love for Him, and let no earthly lover enter into rivalry for it with Him. Although they may have no call to the religious life, or be barred by circumstances from embracing it, they aim to present themselves "as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor., 11, 2).

The Blessings of Virginity

To these maidens St. Paul refers in the glowing words: "The unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy both in body and in the spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world: how she may please her husband . . . He that giveth his virgin [daughter] in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better . . . Let her marry to whom she will: only in the Lord. But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain, according to my counsel. And I think that I also have the spirit of God" (1 Cor., 7, 34 sqq.). As long as they remain true to their divine Lover in purity and virginity, their life, although not

consecrated by a sacrament as is the state of marriage, is much more agreeable, saintly and meritorious in the sight of God, and is also more blessed and happy for themselves than wedded life.

The Non-Appeal of Marriage

There are girls who remain single not so much from a strong fondness for virginity as from a fear of the burdens, risks, and responsibilities of married life. Perhaps at home or elsewhere they have seen married life at its worst, or, anyway, from an angle which rendered it forever uninviting and unappealing to them. At any rate, they prefer not to take a chance. They want to live in a certain degree of personal comfort and well-being. They decline tempting proposals of marriage, and are satisfied to stay at home with their parents, or to work for their own living in offices, stores, factories or in the homes of other people. They want to be and remain personally independent and unencumbered. They are disinclined to exchange what they know they like for something they may not like. They have a secret dread for a step that, no matter to what unhappiness it may lead, can not be retraced: hence they cling to the single life. It is their right as well as their pleasure. No one can charge them with a lack of good sense. Even

happily married women will agree, that these girls usually escape more than they miss. A certain womanly intuition seems to tell these girls this. Many non-Catholic maidens pursue the single life from this motive. It is by no means an unworthy one. Provided such a girl keeps herself straight and good, and remains modest and chaste, she pleases the Lord by being good to herself.

The Default of a Suitable Partner

Some girls would gladly marry, if they got a suitable offer. Barring this, they prefer to remain unwedded rather than to take too great a chance in marriage by accepting someone, regardless of his qualifications or lack of them, merely to be married. Any girl can be married somehow, if she is willing to put up with what comes her way: but a sensible girl rather foregoes marriage entirely in preference to contracting it under a serious handicap. In reference to this it may be noted, however, that many girls who are called to the married state make a big mistake by lightly and haughtily passing up acceptable proposals or chances of marriage when they are young and attractive. From a spirit of independence and pride, which makes them overrate their personal charms and deserts and their power of conquest, they expect not a human but a fairy

prince charming for their husband, until to their regret and chagrin they realize, when it is too late, that their chances for a desirable marriage are gone never to return. As a result they grow sour and embittered against their own fate and against the world at large; they are miserable themselves and make life miserable for others.

The Real Old Maids

They become the so-called old maids, in an opprobrious sense, who have given and still give the whole class of maiden ladies quite undeservedly, of course, a sinister reputation, and who are a distinct liability to whatever community has to harbor them. Critical, meddling, officious, fault-finding, censorious and pharisaical as they are known to be, they are dissatisfied with everybody and everything about them. They are the champion kill-joys and troublemakers. They have obviously missed something in life which they needed very much for their personal rest and contentment, and they blame the entire world for it, when in reality they have only themselves to blame. Either they expected too much in the way of marriage proposals, or they were not properly awake to their opportunities.

Opportunity Knocks But Once

As regards marriage, too, a good opportunity may come to a girl but once. If she is wise provided she wants to marry at all, she will seize it and make the most of it. No matter whom a girl marries, she is taking a chance for in every instance marriage is a sort of lottery, in which the stakes are always high God intended it should be thus. But to win in a lottery, if one wants to play it at all, it is necessary definitely to take a chance before all the prizes are distributed. There is an end to everything; hence also to a girl's real or possible conquests.

Unless she has considerable wealth, it does not require many years for even the most beautiful, lovely and charming girl to start being less irresistible to men. A sensible girl who feels called to the matrimonial state will bear this in mind and behave accordingly to her profit. Sometimes parents are at fault, too, by selfishly keeping their daughters away from men and marriage, merely to have and keep them for themselves, regardless of the girls' subsequent loneliness and unhappiness. This is not the way to have the girls remember their parents later on with sentiments of lively gratitude love and esteem.

Heroines and Saints

Often girls make a sacrifice of their own career in life for the sake of their parents, or of their brothers and sisters, or of their nieces and nephews, who need their help, care and attention. Sometimes they take the place of a deceased mother and bring up the family; again they aim to earn money to render it possible for a brother to study for the priesthood; or they remain single and stay at home with a parent to enable one or more of their sisters to enter a convent. Frequently they have all the burdens of a wife, without the rights of one; and they have all the responsibilities and cares of a mother, without the dignity of motherhood; and at times they have to play the menial part of a domestic and more, without the compensations of a servant girl. But the disparity and inequity of the situation neither gall nor discourage them. With St. Paul they say: "For the charity of Christ presseth us" (2 Cor., 5, 14).

These girls are frequently inclined to marriage, and have alluring offers of marriage; but in sweet charity and tender piety they deny themselves and renounce their strong personal leanings in order to assist others and keep them from misery. They are heroines in the true sense of the word and, in the sight of God, obscure and unrecognized as their lot may be in

the eyes of the world, they count for immensely more than if they got married well and established nicely, and shone in society with all possible splendor and eclat. God's ways are not men's ways; and His measures of value are not those which the world employs.

Bachelor Girls

Girls remain single also because they desire to devote themselves ardently and exclusively to the profession they have chosen as their life's work, such as the profession of a teacher, doctor, lawyer, nurse, governess, social worker, priest's housekeeper, writer, musician, singer, actress or some other honorable calling. They want to be unhampered in pursuing their peculiar vocation and consecrate to it their undivided attention and energy. They are not to be blamed or charged with selfishness of character, narrowness of vision and coldness of heart. They are completely within their rights. They are no more egotistic—and often less so—than the women who follow their inclination to matrimony.

No woman ever gets married from unselfish motives only; she marries to suit, please and improve herself. She is entitled to her choice. But the girls who prefer to eschew marriage in order to be better off after their way of looking at life have the same right to their choice of

staying single. The married people who reproach them for it are usually led to criticize them more by a feeling of envy than by a sense of justice. As long as the single girl leads a virtuous life and keeps her heart pure before the Lord, and pursues piety and religion according to her condition, her station is noble and sublime, and can be rendered replete with good works and heavenly merits.

Our Modern Tabithas

Every pastor knows, that if there are saints among the laity of his parish, they are fully and strongly represented among the maiden ladies. He knows, too, that usually the most generous persons of his parish are again to be found among these same ladies, whose purses are always open, and whose hands are ever ready to give and help whenever religion or charity make a plea for assistance. They have their prototype and model for their life as well as for their reward, in Tabitha, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles. "This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died. . . . The disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent unto him. . . . And when he was come . . . all the widows stood about him, weeping and showing him the coats and garments which Dorcas [Tabitha] made

them. And . . . Peter, kneeling down, prayed. And turning to the body, he said: Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes and, seeing Peter, she sat up" (Acts, 9, 36 sqq.). When a good maiden woman dies and appears before the judgment seat of God, she will not be unaccompanied, but there will be present all the beneficiaries of her charity to plead in her favor, and to procure for her from the Judge a verdict of a glorious resurrection.

The Only Way to Succeed

All the men and women, young or old, who, temporarily or definitely, from whatsoever motive, pursue a life of celibacy or virginity in a secular avocation, can only succeed and persevere in their high purpose if they pray daily and fervently, if they receive Holy Communion worthily at least once a month, if they keep a close guard over their senses, if they associate closely only with virtuous persons, and carefully avoid every danger of sin. After all, perseverance in virtue in every state of life requires about the same means. And it is hardly any more difficult—often it is much less so—to live virtuously in the single life than it is in the married state. To all, whether single, or married, or about to be married, St. Paul says: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God" (Rom., 12, 1, 2).

What has just been said with reference to the maintenance of a virginal life in the world, applies with greater force, of course, to those who are preparing to enter the priesthood or the cloister. The sacred plant of the priestly or religious vocation is as delicate as it is precious. It can not only not withstand any wanton exposure to the sinful pleasures of the world, but easily suffers even from social diversions which are innocent and honorable enough in themselves, but are hardly partial to the sustenance of the call to the sanctuary or the convent.

Whoever is minded to lead a virtuous single life in the world will find much help by joining one of the several so-called Third Orders, for instance that of St. Francis, or St. Dominic. The Third Order is in a wide but true sense a religious order. The members of it are Religious. Even such as aim to enter a convent some day do well by becoming tertiaries as a preparation for the religious life in the cloister.*

*If you are desirous of learning more about the Third Order of St. Francis, you will find the author's book, "The Seraphic Highway," encouraging and heartening. See advertisement in the rear of this book.

CHAPTER IX.

The Priesthood and the Religious Life

PART ONE

"Many are called, but few chosen" (*Matt.*, 20, 16).

A LARGE number of young people are destined by God for the priesthood or the religious state. This is vocation in its highest degree. Hence, although in a wide sense a vocation is required for every kind of life, when we speak of vocation we usually mean the call to the priestly or religious life. This being the highest of all calls, it is consequently the most distinct, emphatic and pronounced. Of this vocation our Lord spoke solemnly in His farewell address the night before He died, when He said: "You have not chosen Me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain" (John, 15, 16). With reference to the other callings in contrast

with the priestly or religious vocation the words of our Savior come to mind: "Many are called, but few chosen" (Matt., 20, 16). A king may love and smile upon the multitude of his subjects and favor them variously: but only a few chosen ones he invites into the inner apartments of his palace to make them his intimates and confidants.

God Calls His Own When He Pleases

Our Lord chooses some the first hour, others the third or sixth, others again the eleventh hour; in other words some receive the divine call to His special service early in childhood, others in youth and adolescence, others finally in manhood or womanhood. But whenever and however the vocation is received, to be among the chosen few of the Lord is of itself a great privilege, a high distinction and an enviable honor. At the same time this choice engenders proportionate obligations, sublime duties and heavy responsibilities in the chosen one.

Many young men are called by God to be priests. He invites them into His sanctuary, into the Holy of Holies, to be His own ministers, the dispensers of His sacred mysteries, the mediators between Himself and men, His ambassadors, representatives, delegates and plenipotentiaries. What dignity could be

higher? What power greater? What honor loftier? The young man who senses that he is called to the priesthood, therefore, crushed as he may be by the consciousness of his personal sinfulness and unworthiness, will gratefully appreciate and cheerfully accept the call from on high, trusting that God Who calls him will equip and strengthen him sufficiently to meet the call and whatever it may demand of him. "God is faithful: by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor., 1, 9). "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor., 10, 13).

"Not to Us, O Lord, Not to Us; But to Thy Name Give Glory"

The more unworthy, unfit and unavailing a young man, in a spirit of true humility, considers himself personally to be, the better, worthier and more efficient a priest God will likely make of him. Here the words of our Lord are verified: "So shall the last be first and the first last" (Matt., 20, 16); and the words of St. Paul: "For see your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble: but the foolish things of the world hath

God chosen, that He may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong; and the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen and things that are not, that He might bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His sight. But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom and justice and sanctification and redemption; that, as it is written: He that glorieth may glory in the Lord" (1 Cor., 1, 26 sqq.).

"I Will Be With Thee"

Everyone who has a genuine call to the priesthood is at first overwhelmed by the thought of his personal unworthiness and unfitness, and is inclined to say with Moses, when he was called by God to act in His Name: "Who am I that I should go to Pharao, and should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod., 3, 11.) This sentiment of true humility is the best recommendation of the candidate. God will answer him as He answered Moses, saying: "I will be with thee" (ib., 12). This assurance suffices every aspirant to the priesthood even as it carried Moses through all the difficulties of his divine commission.

Although they have no vocation to the priesthood, many of our Catholic young men are called to the religious life to become monks, friars or brothers, and devote themselves to monastic or conventual occupations, or to works of Christian education or charity. There is a great dearth of postulants for these various phases of religious life. Whilst this vocation is not so sacred and divine as is that of the holy priesthood, it is yet a very noble and sublime calling, offering every opportunity for the highest service of God, the attainment of heroic personal sanctity, and for participation in the saving of many immortal souls. They who follow it, whilst they have not the honor, also have not the tremendous responsibility, of the priesthood, and in their humbler sphere they easier achieve complete peace of mind, joy of heart and contentment of soul.

Lay-Brothers

If our Catholic young men, who are aiming to lead a virtuous celibate life in the world, understood how much spiritual comfort, strength and consolation they would derive from the monastic or conventual life, by consecrating themselves to it in lowliness of mind and uprightness of heart, our monasteries and convents for brothers would not have to be clamoring for candidates to do the work of God and

religion they are most eager to do, but much of which must be left undone because of the lack of laborers. There are a number of young men who are gifted and called to do this work—for this vocation has room for every kind of talent or aptitude, whether this talent have for its object mental, clerical, mechanical or ordinary labor—but who shun it for mere timidity or vacillation in following the call that God gives them. They belong to the class of those to whom the master of the vineyard says, unavailingly, alas: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" (Matt., 20, 6). They are practically idle; for in their irresoluteness they while away in aimless wishes and purposeless dreams, much precious time, which could be profitably and very meritoriously spent in the vineyard of the Lord for the salvation of souls. They can not answer in sincerity: "Because no man hath hired us" (ib., 7). There are ever so many convents, friaries and monasteries willing to hire them at once and forever. They announce it in books and magazines and newspapers that they are ready and eager to hire as many as come in candor and truth to do the work of the Lord and give themselves unreservedly to His service.

What has just been said applies with equal, yea, with greater force to the vocation of

religious Brothers who devote themselves to teaching our Catholic boys and young men. Their number does not begin to meet the demand for them in our country. The Church in the United States needs more of them from day to day. God gives the call, no doubt, to a sufficient number of young men; but unfortunately only few are seen to answer it.

He Was a Shrewd Boy

It is related that, when St. Bernard and some of his brothers were leaving their home to enter the monastery, the eldest brother said to the youngest: "Behold, our entire patrimony is yours." Instead of being pleased, the boy was stung by this remark and replied: "Whilst you are seizing the kingdom of heaven, do you think I am going to be satisfied with earthly wealth? Far be this from me. I, too, am going to conquer heaven." He made good his word by becoming a monk also, and vying with his brothers in the pursuit of sanctity. It were good for the Church, for themselves and the welfare of souls in general, if our Catholic young celibates in the world developed more of the same rivalry towards taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, and allowed themselves to be spurred on by the many youths, who annually enter the priesthood or the cloistral

life, to take the same generous step in answer to the call many of them are now leaving unheeded.

The Consecrated Spouses of Christ

A vast number of Catholic girls are called to be Sisters or nuns in the many religious establishments dedicated to Christian education and to the multiform works of Christian charity. By calling them to the convent our Lord lovingly and sweetly invites them to join the mystic band of the hundred and forty-four thousand virgins, "having His Name and the Name of His Father written on their foreheads," who sing "as it were a new canticle before the throne; . . . and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. . . . For they are virgins. These follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth" (Apoc., 14, 1 sqq.). Jesus asks them tenderly to be His own dear and consecrated spouses, to live in His own house, near His very tabernacle, to rest on His divine Heart, and to be protected and comforted by His loving arms while they, in their turn, devote their youth, health, talents, energies, and all their sufferings and sacrifices exclusively to Him and His service, and are determined never to know or to admit any other lover but Him in this life as well as in the next.

Woman's Life Is Love

If to a woman, whose very existence is said to be love, there is offered a sublime and ideal relation of love worth all she has to give for it, this is it. As long as she is loyal, Jesus will never disappoint her, but He will always surpass her most ardent expectations and her most glowing prospects of the holiest and sweetest friendship and love. On earth, in the midst of all the hardships and privations of convent life—and in some form or other they are many and severe for almost every nun—He will give her the peace that the world does not know and can not give, and which infinitely exceeds all the happiness the world gives its votaries at the best turn of events. Yet this is only a very vague and weak foretaste of the "eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor., 4, 17) which He is preparing for her in heaven. And here, besides the volume of glory common to all the saints, He will give the virgins a special aureola of distinction to mark them among all the blessed as His particular favorites forever.

The Divine Whisperer

In view of this predilection of our Lord for virgins and the immense rewards He bestows upon them here and hereafter, it is no wonder many of our Catholic girls hear and respond to the divine Suitor Who whispers to them, say-

ing: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty; for He is the Lord thy God, and Him they shall adore" (Ps. 44, 11, 12). As soon as a girl answers this call unselfishly and wholeheartedly, the subsequent words of the same Psalm are verified in her, inasmuch as: "All the glory of the King's daughter is within. . . . After her shall virgins be brought to the King: her neighbors shall be brought to Thee. They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing; they shall be brought into the temple of the King." These words mean, that when a girl enters the convent, her example often draws many others and starts as it were a long procession of girls joyously making for the house of the Lord. She will be given credit for this galaxy of virgins following her lead.

Among the apostles there were at least three sets of carnal brothers: Peter and Andrew; John and James; Simon and Jude. One brother evidently attracted the other to Jesus. This is repeated practically every day somewhere in our country. A young man or woman gives him or her self to the Lord, and soon one or more brothers or sisters, or other relatives, friends or acquaintances follow suit. Vocations are in the best sense of the word contagious.

The Mother of Many

The Psalm goes on to say: "Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee: thou shalt make them princes over all the earth. They shall remember thy name throughout all generations. Therefore shall people praise thee forever: yea, for ever and ever." The sons alluded to are the spiritual children whom a nun bears unto the Lord and unto grace and holiness of life through her prayers, her good example and her benign and salutary influence in the class, sick, work or office room. For having heroically renounced the thrills and ecstasies of carnal motherhood, our Lord makes her a spiritual mother to hundreds and thousands, whom she engenders unto eternal life, and who would be lost forever but for her. They spread the benedictions and the germs of virtue and religion they receive from her throughout the world, wherever they live and move, and remember her name throughout all generations. Therefore shall people praise her forever: yea for ever and ever.

Oh, for Just One Dance with the Prince!

Some years ago the Prince of Wales, the heir apparent to the throne of England, was traveling through our country. Everywhere he was socially feted and lionized. Girls of the most exclusive social sets were frantic to meet him,

and considered themselves most honored and fortunate, if they were privileged to have one dance with him. But how puny and insignificant is this distinction when contrasted with the privilege of being chosen as His own dear bride by the King of kings! The Prince of Wales lives and is much made over today: tomorrow he is dead and all but completely forgotten—while Jesus, the divine Spouse of Christian virgins is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebr., 13, 8).

Although very many of our Catholic girls in the United States have followed and are following this heavenly call to the convent, there are still about as many, if not more, who have the call but neglect it or delay in yielding to it. There is not a community of Sisters in our country that is not sorely in need of recruits. Every Mother Superior is clamoring for postulants. In Catholic magazines and papers you see the most inviting and pressing advertisements of various convents soliciting candidates so they can carry on their work for the glory of God and the welfare of souls. If God wants the work to be done, He doubtless gives the vocation to do it to a sufficient number of girls.

Girls, Who and Where Are You?

Who and where are these girls that have this call and leave it unanswered? You find them

everywhere: in good Catholic homes, in offices, in factories, in stores, as teachers in secular schools and colleges, as nurses in institutions or on private duty, as governesses, domestics and what not. They are should-be or near-nuns. They lead a good life, they are virgins after the Lord's own heart, they aim to please Him in whatever they do or undertake, they are devoted, unselfish and generous. But, if the illustration be not too trivial and irreverent, even as near-wine is a distinct disappointment for those who want the real and generous article, lacking as it does the spirit of animation and exhilaration, so the near-nuns, the almost-nuns, the should-be-nuns, are far from giving our Lord pleasure and from accumulating celestial merits for themselves in the way they would be doing if they were nuns in reality. I remember a young man, whose English was defective, telling of the wondrous hospitality shown him by friendly people, and saying among other things: "Every Sunday I almost get chicken," when he intended to say: "Almost every Sunday I get chicken." Similarly our Savior has reason to say anent many good girls whom He calls to the religious life: "There are many girls whom I almost get for My exclusive service." But the fact is, He never gets them.

Why Do They Balk?

And why do these splendid girls balk or decline to follow the invitation of Jesus? Most of them do not balk definitely, but they merely put off answering the invitation so long until it lapses of itself, or the response to it is out of question. And what leads or beguiles them into this baneful delay? It is usually nothing else than mere indecision and irresoluteness. They simply can not make up their minds once for all to do what they really would like to do, and what they feel they ought to do. To this indecision is always joined a certain lack of trust in God's sweet providence and generous and magnanimous fidelity. They dread to take a chance with His promises, and defer taking the final step from day to day, while their youth is passing swiftly, and their ambition and optimism are waning noticeably, and their personal contentment is growing less from day to day. They feel they are not where they ought to be and where they evidently belong. They are out of their element and they will not be at rest until they are in it. Meanwhile they can not but variously manifest their displeasure at, and their dissatisfaction with, themselves; and they can hardly keep from making their kin and others suffer with them and for them, directly and indirectly.

The Hungry Mule

Without aiming to be pert or flippant I want to say, that the conduct of these girls reminds me of the philosophical problem mooted among amateur schoolmen in the middle ages. They asked the question: If a hungry mule were placed at equal distance between two bales of hay, what would be the result? He could not decide of himself whether to eat of the one or the other, since he had no will, or power of self-decision. The material objects affecting him, being at the same distance from him in opposite directions, would draw and hold him, respectively, with equal force. In consequence, they argued, he could choose neither and, inferentially, he would die of starvation.

This is a merely theoretical discussion. In the face of all philosophy the mule would soon settle the matter satisfactorily for himself. But there are many Catholic girls, of excellent parts and promising qualifications, who for years and years are not able to make up their minds whether they should enter the convent or stay in the world, or whether they should enter now of later, or whether they should join this or that community. Through all their wavering, hesitation and procrastination they grow weaker and weaker, until at times they die of spiritual inanition and starvation, without having taken any definite step whatsoever, and

without having accomplished anything worth while. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt., 11, 12).

Thirty-Five Years in the Convent

I hope I am not conveying the impression to any of my readers, that I am trying to inveigle as many of them as possible into the convent, whether they have vocation or not, by insinuating that convent life is easy, comfortable and delightful. This is farthest from my purpose. I have lived in the convent or monastery—these words are often used synonymously—thirty-five years; hence I have had numerous occasions to feel the burdens and taxes of cloistral life. With all other religious I am willing to bear out the words of our Lord with reference to it: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt., 16, 24); and His words to John and James who wanted to follow Him: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matt., 20, 22.)

Convent Life versus Married Life

No one who has been in the convent for any length of time raves over the natural easiness and sweetness of it. From the standpoint of human nature it is a hard and most trying life:

harder by far, as a rule, than is married life, for a woman as well as for a man. But to those Whom He calls to it our Lord, by means of His heavenly graces, visitations and consolations, renders the life, that to unassisted nature would be impossible of endurance, not only bearable, but even welcome, sweet, enjoyable and thoroughly and intensely delicious. He verifies gloriously and abundantly in their case His encouraging words: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light" (Matt., 11, 30). And they exclaim in passionate love and ecstasy with St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. . . . From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me; for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body" (Gal., 6, 14, 17). "I am filled with comfort: I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation" (2 Cor., 7, 4).

Whoever is drawn to the convent by a genuine love of the Cross of Christ finds great peace and happiness: but only misery and woe await those who enter the cloister from unworthy motives, and without the necessary call from on high.

CHAPTER X.

The Priesthood and the Religious Life

PART TWO

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"
(*Acts*, 9, 6.)

A NUMBER of our Catholic young men and young ladies, who are called by God to the priestly or religious state, remind one, in their attitude towards the divine call, of the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. When Jesus asked her for a drink she thought that she was to bestow a favor on Him, whereas in reality all the favor was to be hers. Our Lord intimated this when He said to her: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and Who He is That saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water" (John, 4, 10). Instead of deliberating whether they should favor God by answering His call to the sanctuary or the convent, these young people should feel highly favored for being called at all.

But how is a girl to know, if she has a vocation for the convent or not? Before I give the answer to this question, I want to observe, that it will apply not only to girls but also to young men, who may have a call to the convent or the priesthood. While the call to the priesthood is more sacred and consequently more distinct than the call to the religious life: still the general canons for distinguishing the relative vocations are about the same for both.

The call to the cloistral life may be extraordinary or ordinary. When it is extraordinary, it is manifested in an unusual manner, say by means of a personal supernatural revelation through a vision, a dream or some similar channel. The subject of this revelation has no doubt and can have no doubt of its genuineness; yet he duly submits it to the judgment of his spiritual director before acting on it definitely. Several saints, for instance St. Paul, received their call in this way.

The Ordinary Way

Instances of this kind of vocation, however, have always been and are today very rare. They who are known to have been the beneficiaries of them, never sought, prayed for, or expected them. These vocations always came unsolicited and altogether unlooked for. Even some of the greatest saints and apostles of the

Church, of both sexes, received their calls to the convent or the priesthood in the ordinary way. This consists in a certain inclination to the life, together with a consciousness of having the qualifications of body and soul that are necessary to make a success of it. The aforesaid inclination does not have to be an overwhelming and irresistible attraction that one sensibly feels for the consecrated life. It may be a mere leaning of the mind and heart towards it, coupled with a will to embrace it, even if the emotional nature should rebel against it with a degree of sensible repugnance, fear and revulsion.

The Will Is Lacking

If one, then, has the desire to follow the life, and possesses the corporal, mental, spiritual and moral properties to render it successful, there is every evidence of vocation. There is nothing more required in addition, but that the person in question definitely resolve to follow the call, and make application to the superior of the convent or, respectively, to the bishop. As soon as the superior receives the postulant in the community, or the bishop admits a young man to sacred orders, the call to the religious or priestly life is completed, and is as certain and secure as God desires it should be. It is to be noted that, all other things

being given, the will of the individual plays a large and decisive part in establishing a vocation, in pursuance of our Lord's words: "If any man *will* come after Me." Usually, when true vocations do not mature, this *will* in the subjects is lacking; and, alas, it is lacking in far too many of our Catholic young men and young ladies in the United States today.

You Must Take a Chance

The mistake many of them make is, they virtually and unconsciously, if not expressly and knowingly, look and wait for an unusual sign of vocation, when they are not entitled to it and will consequently never get it. They are always about to be told by an angel or by our Lord Himself, in a dream or a vision, that they should enter the convent. They delude themselves and ordinarily die unclothed with a religious garb. They should be satisfied to do as thousands of others have done and are doing, to their own and others' temporal and eternal welfare, and follow the ordinary signs of vocation. To use the usual phrase, God wants those who follow Him to take a chance, and to trust in His loving providence and generous fidelity for the future. And they who take this chance in abiding confidence and whole-souled attachment are never known to regret it ever so little.

Famous and Fortunate Chance-Takers

Abraham took a chance when he complied with God's bidding, that he should leave his country and his kin. The apostles took a chance when Jesus, hardly known at the time, bade them to leave their boats and their nets and follow Him. He never disappoints those who sincerely renounce everything to follow Him. But in every single case He makes good His grand and magnanimous promise: "Amen, I say to you that you, who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt., 19, 28, 29).

The Test Is Not Hard

Every girl, therefore, who feels inclined to convent life and is satisfied, that in view of her physical and moral qualifications she can make a good nun, especially if her judgment is supported by that of some other discreet and reliable person or persons, such as her parents, pastor, confessor, her nun teacher or nun friend and the like, is warranted in believing that she has the necessary vocation, and is at liberty to

apply for admission in the cloister. If the superior duly receives her, she need have no fear whatever regarding the genuineness of her vocation, even if she was never vouchsafed a revelation from on high in the form of a heavenly voice or apparition, telling her that her place was in the convent. These manifestations of vocation are, as has been said, most unusual and infrequent. The best marks of a divine call are the ordinary ones, as a rule, for they are easier and surer discerned, and there is not so much danger of delusion in regard to them as there is respecting pretendedly extraordinary signs of vocation. This is true, of course, in an equal degree of a young man contemplating the pursuit of the priestly or religious life.

A Story of a Modern Nun

Referring back to the case of the person mentioned above who, together with a will to consecrate herself to God, feels a certain natural dislike or aversion for the hardships of religious life and consequently shrinks from espousing it, I recall the personal story told me several months ago by an eminent and highly successful Sister in the South. She had gone from Ireland, her native country, on a visit to friends in Paris. While there she was invited by her hosts to attend a retreat which was being preached in one of the churches for the members

of the Third Order of St. Francis. The Franciscan Father who preached the retreat opened it with the well known text: "I will lead her into into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart" (Osee, 2, 14). As he spoke these words, the young lady from Ireland, who was then nineteen years old, felt at once, without any previous thought of it, that they were addressed to her in particular by our Lord Who evidently desired her to leave the world and become a nun. But she did not desire to be a nun, she said. In fact she felt a positive disinclination for the life of a nun, and she fought the idea of her becoming one by dismissing the thought of it from her mind no sooner it presented itself. Yet the further the retreat proceeded the more the impression grew upon her that it was her vocation to enter the convent. It distressed her not a little, as she was minded to stay in the world, leading the best life she could.

The Thought Would Not Down

After the retreat she followed her ordinary pursuits, trying to ignore entirely the mental suggestion of her going into a cloister. But the thought of it would not cease. It followed her wherever she went and whatever she did, bobbing up again and again in divers forms and with various degrees of intensity, some-

times in the shape of kindly pleading, and sometimes with the note of serious rebuke. Finally, to put an end to it once for all, the girl decided to put the matter up to her confessor, a Jesuit Father of great piety and spiritual insight. After she told him the whole story of her experiences in regard to her vocation, he did not hesitate to tell her outright, that she was evidently chosen by Jesus to be His consecrated spouse, and that she was merely hurting Him and harming herself by delaying to defer to His choice. She replied that, if she had to be a nun, she wanted to become a Franciscan nun and devote herself to foreign mission work. He answered that this would be perfectly in order and easily feasible. He designated the convent in which she would find her desires realized. She made application for admission, became a daughter of St. Francis and was eventually sent as the first superior of the community's foundation in the United States. This was about fourteen years ago (in 1913), and God has visibly blessed her and her companions' efforts in behalf of His glory and the salvation of souls. The subject of our story has already founded two large and prospering hospitals in the South, and is much thought of by clergy and laity, non-Catholics as well as Catholics. She has been a Sister for twenty-five years. The moment she was accepted as a candidate

in the convent her repugnance for the religious life vanished completely and forever, and she has always been and is today very happy and contented as one of the chosen brides of the Lamb. May this not also be your experience if, trusting in the Lord, you choose the better part valiantly, even against a certain natural aversion that may beset you?

Must She Ask Her Confessor?

In this connection a word may be said in answer to the query, whether a girl must ask her confessor about her vocation before making a final decision regarding it. There is no direct obligation at all to put this matter up to one's confessor. Yet since it is so important and consequential an affair of life, it is wise to procure what counsel and guidance one can before determining it ultimately; and hardly anyone is more capable of giving a girl sound and reliable direction in this matter than he who, after God and herself, has had the best occasion to observe her spiritual life and thereby to gage the calibre and capacity of her heart, mind and will: the three agents which play the greatest part in the pursuit of, and in the success in, vocation. But it is hardly prudent for a girl to submit this matter indiscriminately to every priest to whom she may occasionally go to confession. For a priest

can hardly form a judgment of value in the matter from one or the other confession. It is enough if she gets the advice of the confessor who has been her spiritual director for a considerable time, and who has therefore had ample opportunity to observe her strength and her weakness, her virtues and failings, and thus to give a trustworthy verdict as to her chances of spiritual success and prosperity in the religious life.

May a Sinner Become a Nun?

The question whether a girl, who has grievously sinned against chastity alone or with others, or who has even lost her virginity, may still become a nun, has been answered in the closing paragraphs of the treatise on chastity. Here it may be repeated that, if the sins have remained hidden, and have been duly confessed and forgiven, they form no hindrance in the pursuit of the religious life. The rueful general remembrance of them may even goad the candidate on to become a more fervent and better nun. The same is true regarding the young man who aspires to the priesthood in similar circumstances. But if the sins have become public with considerable dishonor and shame, there is ordinarily no admittance granted to the convent or the sanctuary. And if the sins have left some secret disease or personal dis-

ability of a serious nature in their train, this handicap must be manifested to the proper authorities before admission to Religion or the priesthood is granted.

Indiscreet Confidences

The sins, however, that caused the trouble, need and should be revealed only to the priest in the confessional. And this pertains to all private and hidden sins. No one has a title to know them save the priest who is to forgive them; and he only under the bond of the most rigorous obligation of secrecy. Girls who enter convents, and in a moment of temperamental weakness indiscreetly tell their fellow-Sisters of the sins of their former life, are about as imprudent as married women who in a mood of over-confidence tell their husbands of their previous frailties. Such revelations serve no other purpose, as a rule, but needlessly to embarrass and handicap the one who makes them. The best attitude to take towards all past, confessed and forgiven sins is to forget them oneself as much as possible, and never to return even in memory or imagination to them individually. As long as we contritely remember in general, that we have been great sinners, in order to retain a vivid impression of God's infinite goodness and mercy, the single sins should never again elicit the least attention

or reflection on our part. Much less should we ever tell them or speak of them to anyone.

At What Age Should a Girl Become a Nun?

The question is often asked, at what age it is generally advisable for a girl, who is satisfied she is called to the religious life, to enter the convent. Here only a general rule can be given. The application of it will in every instance be guided by the personal condition and the other circumstances of the candidate.

A girl who has completed her sixteenth year, all other conditions being favorable, is old enough to become a Religious. Many of our best, happiest and most efficient nuns of today in our various religious communities left the world in their later teens. And they were not the worse at all for having forsaken the world as soon as their age allowed it. Boys studying for the priesthood enter the preparatory seminary at fourteen or fifteen in most cases. For them the seminary is about the same as the convent is for the postulant. Neither the boy nor the girl are asked to decide finally and forever for the life they have entered on until many years after they have tried and experienced it in its essential disciplinary and personal features.

As Soon as They Can Make the Grade

The Church likes to see boys enter the seminary as soon as they are capable of making the grade. One reason the Church wants them at so early an age is to forestall the danger of their losing their vocation if they continue longer in the world. The same reason, proportionally, ought to prevail with reference to the girls. The sooner they give themselves to the Lord, say in their seventeenth year, the better. They have much to learn of the nature and practice of religious life. They will acquire both the theory and practice of it easier in their early youth than later on. The earlier they accustom themselves to the cloistral life, the sweeter it will be to them. In their young years their disposition and temperament are more pliable and adaptable than in their later years. Besides, by giving themselves to the Lord right away, they run less risk of losing their vocation amid the worldly distractions and lures of adolescence. In the matter of vocation, too, it is wise to heed the words of the prophet: "Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found: call upon Him when He is near" (Isa., 55, 6); and the words of St. Paul (2 Cor., 6, 2): "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation."

A Futile Objection

The common objection that it is fatuous for a girl to give up the world, the nature of which she can hardly be acquainted with at sixteen or seventeen; and that she should first see and experience what the world is before she thinks of renouncing it, is futile and untenable. If this objection were consistently urged, a girl would never be mature for the convent, for there always would remain certain features of the world with which she was not acquainted, no matter how much she would thrust herself into the enjoyment of whatever the world offers, even in the way of so-called innocent and honorable amusements, experiences and prospects. Moreover, the same reason would militate against the entrance into the seminary on the part of the boy. Still the Church insists that the young seminarists, even in their vacations, be kept away as much as possible from the pleasures of the world, in order that their divine vocation may be neither lost nor weakened. And yet a priest is more definitely and irrevocably bound to his life than the nun is to hers. If it has to be, any nun may be dispensed and completely released from her religious vows; whereas a priest is a priest forever, without any possibility of a recovery of the personal liberty which he enjoyed as a layman.

Where Ignorance Is Bliss

The girl who enters the convent is usually much better off for knowing as little as possible of the world. Many girls who are eager to find out what the world is before they carry out their desire of entering the convent often end by forfeiting their holy vocation entirely. Our Lord is a jealous God. And the very tentative comparison between Him and the world on the part of the one He calls to be His bride easily irritates Him and moves Him to withdraw the favor He bestowed, and to confer it upon someone else who will appreciate His benign choice and preferential love, and who will turn the divine call to a good account.

We read in the life of St. Jerome that after his conversion from the world, whilst he was leading a life of extreme rigor and self-denial, he was often troubled in his prayers and meditations by ugly visions and tormenting recollections of his former sinful aberrations amid the pleasures of the world: the dance-hall, for instance, with its alluring accompaniments would ever and anon flit through or linger in his imagination, much to his regret and chagrin. St. Augustine, too, in his years of intense piety and ardent love of God, repiningly exclaimed again and again: "Too late have I loved Thee, O Thou ancient and ever new Beauty!" But in the case of no saint do we find, that he or

she regretted having embraced the life of exclusive consecration to God at too early an age, or without first having learned and tried the ways, enjoyments and pleasures of the world.

Circumstances Alter Cases

With all this I am by no means contending, that every girl who wants to be a Religious should join an order when she is sixteen or seventeen. I am merely saying that when one has the marks of vocation at that age, and there is no serious reason to delay the step, she is wise if she goes to the cloister while the going is good, before something or someone enters her life to foil her in her grand purpose to become the consecrated bride of the King of kings. Ordinarily it is advisable for a girl, who wants to be a teacher or a nurse after she is a Sister, to get at least a high school diploma before she enters the convent. Often, too, for her parents' sake or for similar reasons of piety and charity, she may have to wait several years before she can actualize her decision to give herself unreservedly to the Lord. This will not harm her, provided she does it for the sake of God, and is careful the while to safeguard and nurse the vocation that is hers.

The Age Limit

As regards those aspirants to the religious life who are already advanced in years, it must be observed that the various religious orders and congregations have an age limit with reference to the applicants for membership. For good reasons, however, they will usually dispense with this rule in favor of an otherwise worthy and desirable candidate. There are even orders of Sisters who receive widows among their members. Some very great saints of both sexes entered religion in mature years.

What has been said of the vocation to the nunnery, as to young and old alike, applies as well to the vocation to the priesthood or the religious brotherhood. A boy of sixteen is by no means too young to enter upon the consecrated life. And a man of forty or more may still be capable of achieving great success in it. In the Franciscan order, for instance, we venerate Blessed Sebastian of Mexico, who had been married twice and betrothed a third time when, as a man of about seventy years, he entered the order as a lay-brother and edified everyone by his sanctity. God is wonderful in His saints.

CHAPTER XI.

The Priesthood and the Religious Life

PART THREE

"I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord" (*Ps.* 121, 1).

SINCE the call to the religious or priestly life is so grand and wondrous a distinction, our Lord is not a little jealous of its ready and grateful reception. In other words, He is easily hurt and deeply displeased, if it is trifled with or made little of. He is then inclined to withdraw it and to withhold it forever after. The rich young man in the gospel, whom Jesus lured so lovingly to leave all and follow Him, for growing sad at the invitation and going away, lost all the favor he had with our Savior, and was never again asked to follow Him. Had he responded, he would no doubt have become one of the greatest disciples of Jesus, immortally glorious in this life and the next. Now no

one knows his name, and no one envies him his fate. The same is true regarding the young man who, when Jesus asked him to follow Him, evaded the invitation by alleging, that he wanted to stay at home until his father was dead and buried. Since this was a mere subterfuge—for no one insisted more on the discharge of the duty of filial love and devotion than Jesus—our Lord did not consider it, but answered abruptly: "Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead" (Matt., 8, 22).

You Can Not Cheat the Lord

This reply of Jesus applies strongly to many young people who attempt to escape the call of the Lord by unwarrantedly making themselves believe, that they must remain in the world for the sake of their parents or others that require their help or company. They not only cheat the Lord and themselves, but they usually prove to be of little solace and assistance to those in whose behalf they pretend to have renounced one of the greatest gifts God confers upon a soul. And this gift is hardly ever individual. If it is duly accepted it enriches not only those to whom it has personally been given, but also all those who are directly or indirectly involved in the sacrifice that is made for God, especially the parents and the close relatives of the candidate for the religious or

priestly state. For having cheerfully borne their part in the holocaust, God will reward them greatly in this life and in the next. It was with a purpose that our Lord had so many of the relatives of His disciples get so close and dear to Him.

When Jesus Is Angry

Just how Jesus is affected by a neglect of His special call, He plainly indicated in the parable of the great supper (Luke, 14, 16 sqq.). The host tendered particular personal invitations to several of his favorites. They made excuses which to them seemed plausible. But the host, being angry, charged his servants to bring in other guests instead of those who were invited, and he added with decision and finality: "But I say unto you, that none of those men who were invited, shall taste of my supper." He was through with them and would never consider them again.

Here, perhaps, we have the clue to the wonderful manifestations in heathen lands where our missionaries are laboring for Jesus Christ. Frequently the neophytes of both sexes soon after their conversion show a decided leaning towards the religious life or the priesthood, respectively; and within a short time they attain eminent sanctity in their profession.

Maybe they were "the poor, the blind and the lame", who got the vocation declined by certain young men or young ladies in our parishes, and exploited it unto heroic sanctity. Are you going to forfeit your vocation in favor of someone else?

Procrastination Bespeaks Lack of Appreciation

Even if idle and vague procrastination does not kill or nullify a religious or priestly calling, it implies little consideration for our divine Lord, and contains neither merit nor profit for the one who practices it. Whoever, without sufficient grounds, declines to give a ready answer to a definite invitation, evinces a doubt whether it is advisable to accept it, or whether it may not be wiser to look or wait for something better. The insinuation is not calculated to win favor with the Lord.

The girl, for instance, who only gives herself to Jesus after she despairs of being courted by an acceptable suitor, pays Him a dubious compliment to say the least. And the girl who foolishly devotes her best years, her finest energy, her richest ambition and her warmest love to the pursuit of earthly success and happiness, and consecrates herself to Jesus only when the flame of youth has died away and the fires of

lue are going down, can not expect to gain much credit with and to grow very dear to her divine Bridegroom when she finally condescends to meet His advances.

The Juice of the Orange

You would not feel at all flattered, for example, if someone invited you to dinner and would eat the flesh-meat herself and give you the bones; and would press and drink the juice from the oranges and give you the dry fibres and rinds. It would be an insulting offer. You even hurt a child when you present it with a sky-rocket that is spent, or a shooting-cracker that is shot. Our Savior has feelings, too. He never intended His consecrated homes to be the last refuges of disappointed, jaded and broken hearts. He wants the freshest, the liveliest and most promising material for His divine worship. "My son [daughter], honor the Lord with thy substance, and give Him of the first of all thy fruits" (Prov., 3, 9).

The girls who are called to married life are, as a rule, not so slow and timid in answering the call, when a good opportunity of marriage is offered them. If they feel inclined to matrimony, and have the qualities necessary to a married woman, and fall in love with a suitable and desirable young man, they are not slack in accepting his proposal of marriage. They easily

satisfy themselves that they have a vocation for marriage, and decide to take a chance. And yet in a way they take more of a chance in getting married than the girl who enters the convent. There is no novitiate in marriage, to give the candidate a trial of it, and then allow her either to remain in it or leave it at pleasure. Nor can the step into marriage ever be retraced as long as the other party is living. But, if it has to be, a girl can always leave the convent with dispensation, no matter how long she has been in it, once she feels she can not be happy as a Religious.

A Trial of Convent Life Is No Disgrace

Of course, no girl should enter the convent frivolously or thoughtlessly; but it is not wrong for a girl, who has reasons to believe she has a vocation, to make a trial of religious life and, if she discovers that the convent is not the place for her, to discontinue it and return to the world. This is no disgrace by any means, and she needs not to be ashamed of it at all. It is rather an honor and a credit for her to have attempted the consecrated life with a pure intention, even if on better experience she was advised to dismiss it. St. Benedict Labre, St. Camillus, St. Rose of Viterbo and other saints either left of their own accord, or were asked to leave, the convents they entered with

a view of pursuing the religious life. Their apparent failures, far from hindering them from rather helped them unto holiness.

"I Know You Not"

At all events, if our Catholic young men and young ladies, who are inclined to the sacerdotal or religious life, would be as willing to take a chance, and as quick in making up their minds, as are our young people who are leaning towards marriage, there would not be the dearth of priestly and religious vocations of which the Church in America justly complains. There are by far too many Catholic youths as well as maidens who, in the way of vocation, belong to the class of foolish virgins who were not ready when the bridegroom came. "They that were ready [the wise virgins] went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins [the foolish], saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen I say to you, I know you not" (Matt., 25, 10-12). There is a rather heavy and an uncannily final sound to the words: "And the door was shut;" and: "I know you not." They are merely the application of the words of St. Paul: "If any man know not, he shall not be known" (1 Cor., 14, 38).

The Unprofitable Servant

The attitude and possible lot of the young people who neglect the divine call is also graphically illustrated by our Lord in the parable of the talents. The servant who received one talent "digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money. But after a long time the lord of those servants came, and reckoned with them. . . . He that had received the one talent, came and said: Lord, I know that thou art a hard man. . . . And being afraid I went and hid thy talent in the earth: behold here thou hast that which is thine. And his lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, . . . thou oughtest . . . to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take ye away therefore the talent from him. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness" (Matt., 25, 30). Our Lord plainly conveys the impression, that He will not allow the excuse, that He is a hard master or, in other words, that the religious or priestly life is too hard. They who have this conception of His character and manner are not deserving of admittance into His sanctuary, but are consigned to remain outside, groping in the dark, and completely at a loss to know what manner of life they should embrace.

Almost every priest sooner or later meets with pitiable types of apparently excellent, highly gifted and splendidly accomplished young people who, for having passed up their real vocation, seem incapable of entering upon any other calling with relish, determination and success. Their casting weakly and aimlessly about for some kind of a living is a sorry exhibition of the exterior darkness to which, in consequence of not having duly bartered with the precious talent entrusted to them, they appear to be hopelessly consigned. They would have done much better had they at least given the cloister or the seminary a trial, even if they would have had to quit it later on. This apparent failure no doubt would have given them clarity and decision regarding their aptitude for some other manner of life, and qualified them to embrace it wholeheartedly and pursue it successfully.

The Appeal Is Touching

There is a sweet and a certain pathetic vibration in the words by which our Lord invites a soul to His special service. He says tenderly: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty; for He is the Lord thy God, and Him they shall adore" (Ps. 44, 11). The

three phrases: "hearken, see, and incline thy ear," are heaped for the purpose of emphasis. Our Lord wants to arrest the attention of the beneficiary, and induce her to have an eye not only for His glory and pleasure, but also for her own personal welfare and distinction. Close and undivided attention to, and wise and intense concentration on, the manner and nature of our Savior's loving invitation will be sufficient to mature the religious or priestly vocation in any candidate, and to provide the required stimulus and strength for its seasonable, efficient and blissful pursuit.

No Sin: But a Grave Risk

Yet it is but just to observe, that no matter how distinct, positive and certain the ordinary call to the religious or priestly life may be, one does not sin for not heeding it. After all it is a privilege submitted by God to the choice and pleasure of the beneficiary, who can accept or decline it at will. In this sense, too, our Savior says: "If any man *will* come after me," etc. Yet by declining the state to which one is called one risks entering a state to which one is not called, and thus jeopardizes his happiness and salvation in no little degree. It is significant that Jesus, after the rich young man refused His explicit call to leave all and follow Him, even though the young man had been

very virtuous up to that time, so much so that "Jesus, looking on him, loved him" (Mark, 10, 21), gave him little prospect of getting to heaven; for, as the young man went away sorrowful, "Jesus looking round about, saith to His disciples: How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! . . . It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (ib., 23, 25).

Over a Million Dollars

Apart from the peril to one's salvation, whoever has a keen sense of his own interests will not lightly forfeit so great a privilege and so inestimable a distinction as is the call to the religious or priestly state, which may involve an innumerable multitude of heavenly treasures. In one of the eastern states some time ago a young married man of professedly idealistic tendencies was left a fortune of more than a million dollars. He felt inclined to renounce and forego it on the plea that money has a tendency to blunt the mind and degrade the heart. His young wife, however, prevailed upon him to take it, since he could do so much good with it in various ways. He yielded to her reasoning and accepted the money. It may have done him and his wife good, and it may have done them harm.

Dissuasion Is Dangerous

But the call to the state of a Religious or a priest, when duly lived up to, will always be of the highest benefit to the one to whom it is tendered. The relatives of the beneficiary, therefore, the parents especially, far from trying to dissuade the person in question from yielding to the call, should do all in their power to encourage him or her to respond to it readily and gratefully. For "the harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest" (Matt., 9, 37, 38). If in the face of this urgent plea of Jesus, parents or other relatives directly or indirectly keep a young person from answering the call of God to the convent or the priesthood, they burden themselves with a tremendous responsibility, and will be beholden for all the misery ensuing for the misled candidate as well as for themselves. God will neither be mocked nor cheated of His rights.

"We Shall Go Into the House of the Lord"

The Church teaches us that final perseverance in grace can not be merited. It is always a gratuitous gift of God. But St. Augustine says it can be procured by ceaseless prayer. The same, in a degree, may be said of the vocation to the priestly or religious life. Priests

and Religious take Holy Communion daily. Hence those who desire to become priests or Religious can do nothing better in the way of preparation for their high calling than to receive their Eucharistic Lord, as much as possible, every day, and to lead a life in accordance with this pious practice.

The young person who feels the whisperings of a divine priestly or religious vocation will do well to ponder on the words of Jesus: "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and see the countries. For they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John, 4, 35, 36); and then to say trustingly and fearlessly: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: . . . therefore my heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced; moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope. . . . Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance; at Thy right hand are delights even to the end (Ps. 15, 5 sqq.). I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 121, 1).*

*The readers who are inclined to the priestly or religious life will read with profit the author's book, "Uni Una—To the One God My One Soul." See advertisement in the rear of this book.

CHAPTER XII.

Holy Marriage

"This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Eph., 5, 32).

MOST of the young readers of this book will undoubtedly feel inclined and called to the married state. They who have this vocation will do well by beginning as early as possible to conceive the correct view of holy matrimony. They will take to heart the words of St. Paul: "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church . . . Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let their wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it . . . For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother: and shall cleave to his wife. And they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Eph., 5, 23 sqq.).

The Grandeur of Christian Marriage

The union between Christ and the Church is the sublimest, strongest, and tenderest; it is the most sacred, loyal and lasting union conceivable: no union could be more intimate, none more concentrated, and none more enduring. And this union is the symbol and model of the union between husband and wife in marriage. This thought alone must fill every young person contemplating marriage with a certain awe or holy dread, first, because of the sacred intimacy of marriage: it postulates the closest possible relations between the partners of it; second, because of the concentration and exclusiveness it requires: once married, you may love none other but the partner you have chosen, and you must love him or her with all your heart and soul; and third, because of the endurance of it, which extends until the death of one of the parties, for "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt., 19, 6).

The Awfulness of Christian Marriage

The candidate for marriage who has this high and just conception of the matrimonial contract will not be inclined to enter it but after the most mature and careful consideration. When you contract regarding other things, the contract is rescindable or, anyway,

the damage incurred may be remedied. Say you buy an automobile for three thousand dollars: in case you do not like the particular type of car you have chosen after you drive it a while, you can exchange it for another or buy a new car; similarly when you acquire a house or a farm. Not so, however, when you enter into and consummate the holy contract of marriage: it binds as long as the parties to it live and, no matter how disagreeable and impossible you may find your chosen mate to be, you are bound to him or her in the closest and most familiar manner, and you may turn to no other partner until death separates you.

Consider the pains you would take not to be disappointed, for instance, in the purchase of an expensive automobile: you would gather various catalogues and read them over carefully; you would go from store to store to inspect divers types of cars closely; you would interview friends and acquaintances whom you looked upon as connoisseurs and experts in the automobile business; especially would you get the advice of those of your friends who had direct or indirect experience of the make of car you are contemplating to procure: in a word you would be a long time in deciding just what you wanted to do in the matter, since so much of your hard-earned money was to be invested in it. Yet, as was stated above, if you should

happen not to like the acquired machine after buying it, you would have every chance of getting rid of it in favor of another. Or at any rate you could store it away in a garage and pay no further attention to it. But once married to a particular person, an exchange for another is no longer possible. Nor can you afford to neglect or ignore a matrimonial mate you dislike. Your nuptial pact will postulate both continuousness and closeness of converse in spite of whatever feelings of disappointment, aversion and disgust that may assail you. For this reason every sensible person meditating matrimony deliberates cautiously, soberly and leisurely before entering into it. If any sad proverb has a frequent, yea daily, tragic fulfilment, it is: "Marry in haste, and repent in leisure." The wise choose to be slow and contented, rather than hasty and sorry.

Marriage Means More to Woman Than to Man

While this applies to both sexes, it seems to affect the girl more than the man. Marriage for natural reasons means more to, and demands more of, woman than man. It involves her more completely and possesses her more intimately. Hence every girl ought to be particularly on her guard against undue haste in regard to marriage. She ought to forestall

every inordinate and precipitate desire of it by the mature reflection on the hallowed intimacy and sacred responsibilities of marriage. It has wondrous thrills of sacred pleasure and ravishing ecstasies of virtuous delight, it is true; but none that are not paid for dearly and abundantly. If there is a balance, it is usually on the deficit side: the payment is higher than the enjoyment.

To this payment God alluded forcibly in the words He spoke to the first woman after the fall, and every girl candidate for matrimony will ponder on these words with profit: "To the woman also He said: I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee" (Gen., 3, 16). To their bitter regret many married women get the gist of these solemn words of the Lord only when it is too late. They blame themselves keenly for not having taken them to heart when it would have profited them. Often there is but a brief period between the wearing of the bridal veil and that of the funeral shroud on the part of a woman. In view of all this it pays to be sensible, and to avoid plunging heedlessly into what may be irretrievable misery and woe.

Why the Caution?

I am by no means saying this to discourage from an honorable and happy marriage those girls who are called to it by God: I merely aim to dissuade recklessness and impetuosity that may prove unutterably and permanently disastrous. Maybe girls, especially younger girls, in their nervous excitement and amorous exaltation of mind, need this warning more than men, who are usually more calculating, even though they run the lesser risk, in marriage than women.

And if the question is asked, why I am so warm and insistent in cautioning girls against hastiness in entering marriage, whereas I did not even register the same caution with reference to girls entering the convent, I will say that, whilst precipitancy in espousing the religious life is also dangerous and deplorable, still its consequences are not nearly so fatal, since a girl can be easily and readily disengaged from her obligations to the convent, while there is no power on earth that can free a woman from her vows of marriage, however galling and tyrannical they may prove to be. This is a big and substantial difference that deserves recognition. The pleasure-loving world likes to prate of the large number of unhappy nuns. Compared to the number of unhappily married women, the number of discontented nuns is negligible and vanishing.

To Train Betimes for Marriage

The postulants, then, of marriage, who are imbued with its sacred character and awful obligations, are at the same time aware that, if marriage is going to be a source of happiness and well-being to them, they must prepare for it betimes, remotely as well as proximately. The remote preparation for marriage consists in acquiring those habits of body and mind which the marriage state demands. They are not acquired in a day or a year. Rome was not built in a day. The candidates for marriage will do well by applying, in their remote preparation for marriage, the maxim of the immortal Greek painter Apelles: "No day without a stroke." Every day they should train themselves in some way to become worthy and desirable life-partners in marriage to their predestined mates. This important training no candidate for marriage can begin too soon; most candidates start it too late.

Marriage Contains Three Roles

For a young man to be an ideal marriage mate he has to be eminent in three roles: he must be a hundred per cent husband, a hundred per cent father, and a hundred per cent lover, steadfastly and consistently. And the girl who is an ideal nuptial partner must be a hundred per cent wife, a hundred per cent mother, and a

hundred per cent sweetheart, loyally and constantly. No one makes grades of a hundred per cent without long, diligent and painstaking preparation in any science, art, trade or profession, let alone in the sublimest and most difficult achievements of life. The holy priesthood subjects its candidates to a lengthy and arduous discipline, preparatory to the reception of the sacrament, in order to qualify them to become good, efficient and happy priests of God. Similarly only a long and close self-discipline and general practice of virtue and piety will give the matrimonial candidate the strength of character, the power of self-repression and the store of good habits which matrimony requires to insure its partners a peaceful, fruitful and contented life. Unfailing loyalty and devotion, abiding love and consecration, unstinted service and attention, in the closest and most intimate relations of life, to one and the same person year in and year out, possibly for a long stretch of years, often tax the most generous and virtuous persons to the limit. At any rate one can never start too early in life to make ample provision of them. Their acquisition implies the spirit of unselfishness in a high degree, a habit of industry, economy and thrift, the quality of magnanimous forbearance and forgiveness as well as of ready and boundless sympathy, together with

an endless capacity for patient suffering, heroic endurance and angelic resignation of self.

The Summary of Goodness

All these qualifications are summed up in the words: "Blessed are all they that fear the Lord: that walk in His ways" (Ps. 127, 1). I know that what I have mentioned as the necessary remote preparation for matrimony refers to the ideal. Yet it is only by striving after the ideal that one attains what is worth while and grateful in life. With reference to marriage, too, our Savior spoke the words: "For which of you, having a mind to build a tower, does not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it: lest, after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build and was not able to finish?" (Luke, 14, 28, 20). How often is not this mockery indulged in nowadays at the expense of thoughtless and frivolous young persons running haphazardly into the tremendous responsibilities of marriage.

There Are Bad Days Ahead

In regard to marriage also the other words of the Bible are pregnant with advice: "Remem-

ber thy Creator—and the vocation He has given you—in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not" (Eccl., 12, 1). No matter how soon and how early you prepare yourself for holy matrimony, certain days of affliction will come upon you. These are unavoidable in every station of life. But as long as you feel guiltless of their coming, they will be much easier to bear. It is only when one has only himself or herself to blame for the evil days which are on, that one experiences and winces under all their bitterness and woe.

All About the Hope-Chest

The hope-chest has got to be quite a piece of furniture for girls preparing for marriage. They usually get it before they are actually and finally engaged to be married. Hence its filling pertains to the gradual preparation for marriage. If they were as eager to store their hearts and minds with the virtues and knowledge necessary for a happy marriage as they are bent on supplying the hope-chest with useful and useless articles of housekeeping, there would be more successful and fortunate marriages. It is very unwise to be frantically concerned about incidentals, that will always be comparatively easy of acquirement, and at

the same time to pay no or very little attention to the essentials, the obtainment of which is gradual and laborious, and the lack of which in marriage is never anything short of catastrophical. And this applies as well to the man who donates and helps fill the hope-chest, as to the girl to whom it is presented. The requisite remote and proximate preparation for marriage is strictly a bilateral or a fifty-fifty proposition, incumbent as much on the one as on the other partner to the marriage. The marriage can be ideal only if both prepare themselves duly for it. A very important item of this preparation is, that the man is well able to supply, and the woman to keep, a good home.

CHAPTER XIII.

Courtship

> "*Be not afraid to give her* (*Sara*) *to this man, for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife*" (*Tob.*, 7, 12).

THE proximate preparation for marriage is called courtship or company-keeping. The first question arising as to it is: When should the candidate enter upon this period? Experts on physiology, economy and sociology, all of which sciences enter closely into the problem of marriage, say that the best age for marriage for a man is from twenty-three to twenty-six, and for the woman from twenty-one to twenty-four. The closer you adhere to these respective ages, the better will be your prospects of a happy and prosperous marriage. If you would have to choose between anticipating and lagging behind this period, perhaps the latter would be preferable to the former; today particularly when the struggle for existence in our high and strained standard of living is very

intense, and when so many promising marriages of young people suffer shipwreck mainly through economical reasons; namely because of the impossibility of acquiring or maintaining a sufficient income to render competition with their equals in society possible.

Child-Marriages Are Dangerous

It is as a rule inadvisable and hazardous for very young people to contract marriage. Boys and girls in their teens ordinarily have a very hazy and defective, if not an entirely wrong or inadequate, conception of marriage. Physiologically, too, they are hardly equal to assume the weighty burdens of marriage. Being temperamentally immature, their likes and dislikes are highly fickle and changeable, and therefore they can seldom give promise of the reliableness and constancy marriage absolutely requires: hence, even if the economical provision were copious and trustworthy—usually it is the most vulnerable element of the contract—the marriage would be full of the menace of discontentment, instability and disruption. Marriage is a full-grown man's and woman's job; and even they are not always equal to it.

This being established, it is evident that young people should not be in too great a hurry to start regular company-keeping or a definite

courtship. If this starts early and is unduly protracted, it is almost in every case fraught with great dangers to the innocence and virtue of the parties to it, and not seldom it ends in a non-marriage in the end, much to the disappointment, displeasure, chagrin and resentment of at least one of the parties, as a rule; and perhaps in the majority of cases the girl is the one who loses heavier and receives the more poignant smart of the heart. Frequently, too, the families of the parties become bitterly and lastingly estranged through the rupture and separation ensuing between the lovers.

Love Is Terrible

Besides, love, when it is ardent, becomes so tyrannical a passion, that it hardly leaves room for much other occupation of the heart and mind; particularly in young people in whom love, once the heart conceives it, has a tendency swiftly to become uncontrollably ardent, absorbing, all-possessing and obsessing to such a degree as to render the acquisition of useful and necessary knowledge, or of a profitable art, craft or trade, quite out of question for the time being, in the very period when the mind is most acquisitive, the memory most tenacious, and the members of the body most adaptable. Thus at the lowest estimate much valuable time is lost in the remote preparation for mar-

riage, and often this time can never be reclaimed.

The tide waits for no one; and youth with its splendid opportunities of adaptation and acquisition returns for no one. And what is worse, this furious love of young people easily takes the bit in its mouth, to use a common metaphor, and defies reason, virtue and religion as well as parents, friends and pastors to hold it in check; and ere they are cognizant of it, it hurls the impetuous lovers into one of the disastrous marriages alluded to above, the sad consequences of which they may live many years to rue with bitter and incurable heartache and regret. The personal appeals sensed by boys and girls in their teens are usually not the same as those they experience in later, more mature and more sensible years: hence, since marriage is for life, it is prudent to defer the final choice of a partner to that period, when it promises to be such as to win the reasonable approbation of the mind and attachment of the heart during all the subsequent years.

Love-Proof

What has been here said does not imply, that young people in their later teens, must eschew all society and company of the opposite sex. Not at all. A wise and well-supervised mingling of the sexes in a social way is helpful

to both, variously and decidedly. But it is one thing for boys and girls to meet in wholesome and prudently chaperoned frolic and pastime; and another thing for a boy and a girl to yield, wittingly or unwittingly, to a sexual attraction for each other, and start an actual courtship, formally or informally. The first has definite advantages for its participants; the second is usually laden with threats and perils for those who engage in it. The longer a person under twenty can keep the heart and mind love-proof; in other words, can keep them in easy possession and full control: the better are the prospects for the present and future happiness of this person.

Puppy Love

I need not add that, if I have inveighed against premature regular courtships of young people in their teens, I disapprove still more emphatically of the irregular courtships, euphemistically so-called, among them; for they are usually nothing else than sinful flirtations, commonly styled petting or necking parties, whose one purpose seems to be to drain the body of its healthy vitality, while the heart is drained of virtue and honor, and the soul is made a stranger to innocence and grace. They are an abomination to God and men. They

very positively come under the heading: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom., 6, 23). Instead of being called "puppy love", in view of its deleterious effects upon the emotional, spiritual and moral life of the parties to it, this behavior ought to be called "the devil's game", since it is one of the most common and crafty ruses by which Satan gradually and insensibly lures innocent boys and girls into ugly sin and filthy vice under the guise of love. When it is legitimately bestowed, love is the most sacred of human sentiments; but when it is illicitly indulged, it degenerates into an element of the vilest corruption and the lowest depravity, in keeping with the proverb: "When what is best is spoiled, it becomes the worst."

Things to Remember About Love

The most important question relative to courtship is the partner of it. Before handling this question it will be clarifying to premise certain truths that bear on it vitally. First, in human beings love, if it is going to serve the high and eternal purposes for which it is destined, must not be a blind and uncontrolled instinct, but rather an urge that is cautiously restrained and wisely led by reason, faith, virtue and good sense. In physical nature the mightier the power, the stronger is the check

applied. Little mountain brooks are allowed to run free and untrammeled: but the mighty Mississippi is carefully hedged in by powerful levees, in order to secure to it a constant, regular and beneficent flow. In consequence it looks more beautiful and majestic and, instead of spreading havoc and destruction far and wide, it serves as a medium of traffic for business and pleasure on a large scale, and supplies countless cities and villages with all the water they require.

Great Forces Require Strong Checks

The only way steam is of any value is when it is duly confined and properly controlled; then there is no limit to its usefulness: whereas if it is unchecked and allowed to escape freely, it can cause untold wreck and disaster. The same is true of all elements that have great power and unbounded force: they only serve when they are held in leash and sensibly managed. The high-powered automobile requires the best steering wheel and most reliable brakes. In human nature love is one of the strongest factors, containing indefinite motive power. Wisely controlled it can produce an incalculable amount of happiness not only to its possessor but to many others who come under his or her influence: but left to run

freely and wantonly, in defiance of reason and sober judgment, it causes a proportionate amount of unhappiness to the same persons. One of the most pernicious tenets, therefore, is the principle, that love is a law unto itself, and is accountable to no other agency; it needs to consider no barrier and should not be interfered with by any other influence whatsoever. This principle, in its practical applications, is responsible perhaps for at least one half of all the misery afflicting mankind today.

Your Case of Love Is Not Unique

Another thing to be remembered is, that your case of love, if you have one, is not singular and solitary. Human nature has always been and is today the same, by and large, everywhere and among all classes and nations and races of men. Your individual form or passion of love, much as it may engross and completely as it may absorb you, has been agitating and is today agitating millions of hearts with the identical vehemence and warmth which you experience. Some there have been and are who by wise control exploited this love to their lasting bliss, either by reasonably pursuing it, if it was honorable and favorable, or by prudently checking and banishing it, if it looked dangerous and threatening to their best interests of life.

Learn When and How to Stop

Others, again, under the influence of the same love, either because they abused or misused a good and precious love, or blindly and passionately followed an unholy or perilous love, have gone and are going to their irretrievable ruin. Important, then, as is the manipulation of the throttle and the brakes in a railroad engine, or of the steering wheel and the brakes in an automobile, so important or, rather, far more so, is the use of good sense and virtue in the conduct of love for the making or unmaking of life. When you learn to drive an automobile your teacher will tell you, that to know how and when to stop is really more necessary in a way than to know how to start; and in general they tell us that often it requires more force to stop a train or a car than to start them. So, too, it is frequently far easier to start loving someone than to stop it; and not uncommonly it requires vastly more virtue and character to discontinue a love affair than to begin one.

Marriage in the Offing

A further truth to bear in mind is, that courtship or company-keeping is only permissible when there is at least a possibility and some prospect of a marriage ensuing between the partners of the courtship. If a marriage is

out of question entirely, there is nothing to warrant the proximity and easy converse between the sexes which company-keeping involves, and which are always more or less attended by certain dangers to innocence and purity. The assumption of these dangers, carefully minimized, however, is justified by the possibility and prospect of marriage, since people who are meditating an indissoluble union have a right to a reasonable acquaintance with one another before they bind themselves to one another for life. But when marriage is excluded, company-keeping is an unjustifiable exposure of oneself to moral dangers, and consequently reprehensible and forbidden in every instance.

The Volcano of Love

For a young man, then, and a young lady "to go together" merely for the sake of company in social diversion and pleasure, without any chance of marriage between them, is not in keeping with the standard of Christian virtue and decency. Of course, once or again for a girl to be honorably escorted to a party or a theatre by a young man, does not fall under the caption of company-keeping, and is of itself not wrong. But even this should not be of frequent occurrence with the same person, when there is no thought of marriage between

them. First and second cousins, uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, who know they can or will never be married to one another, not seldom maintain an amorous flirtation under the cover of relationship, and are sooner or later beguiled into lewd and incestuous thoughts, desires and practices. In no relation of life may the passion of sexual love be trifled with. It resembles a volcano inasmuch as its force may long remain hidden to the world and its very subjects, but of a sudden it bursts forth and seeks expression regardless of what is involved in or may result from its tremendous eruption.

Illicit and Adulterous Company-Keeping

You may not keep company with a person who is married to another. This is self-evident, but it is not always observed, to the detriment and ruination of many a thoughtless and reckless young man or girl, who are easily decoyed into crass adultery through their inconsiderate friendliness with a married person; and at times this adultery is even followed by murder. And since a divorced person is really married, the same rule applies. And yet how many foolish Catholic young men and silly Catholic girls allow themselves to be vamped, as the phrase goes, into a courtship with a divorced person; and before they realize

it, they are hopelessly enmeshed in a desperate affair of unhallowed and adulterous love.

Then they begin to wonder, if there may not be some possibility of contracting a lawful marriage with this divorced person, because of some flaw in the marriage from which a civil divorce was procured, or for some other reason. Usually, of course, the only thing that would legalize their marriage would be the death of the partner of the divorced person. They consequently make up their minds to wait until this person dies, which usually does not happen very soon. In the meanwhile their so-called courtship has a terrific tendency to degenerate into more serious adulterous and criminal intimacies—for divorced people are usually very quick and clever in leading their guileless and unsuspecting company into undue familiarities and highly immoral irregularities —and very commonly they get tired waiting for the way to become clear for a rightful marriage, and impatiently they attempt marriage outside of the Church, and as a result they get away from their religion, from virtue, from God and salvation entirely and forever.

Playing with Fire

They played with fire and were burnt to a crisp, as far as their conscience and religion were concerned. They found it easier to begin

a shady love relation than to end it. Many automobile accidents that end in the saddest deaths are recorded in the few and simple words: "The chauffeur lost control of the car." Many a baneful wreck of life and salvation may be recorded by the words: "The victim lost control of the power of love." It pays, therefore, never to let your hand off the steering wheel and brakes of your love; in other words, always to have your heart to be controlled by your reason and faith. You will thereby stave off disaster and forestall regret.

The Story of the Fatal Choice

Some time ago I heard a very sad story of a Catholic girl implicated in an unfortunate love affair with a divorced man. While it was still going on, she took sick and was taken care of in a Catholic hospital. She had confided her unhappy and unholy love to the Sister who was her nurse. The pious nun did all in her power to reclaim the girl, whose illness was increasing from day to day, from her dangerous love affair, and to prepare her for a holy death. She was congratulating herself on her success, for the girl actually showed what the Sister thought were signs of repentance, and appeared to be entirely weaned from the object of her deplorable attachment.

One day, however, as the girl lay in the throes of approaching death, her divorced lover came into the hospital unannounced and made straight for her room. When the Sister recognized him she asked him kindly not to disturb the very sick girl, and to go his way. She placed the crucifix in the patient's hands, and exhorted her to fix her heart and love on Jesus alone. But no sooner the girl got a glimpse of her married lover, she clamored frantically for him and his presence. Flinging the crucifix away from her she shrieked: "I do not want this thing: I want him. Oh, come to me!" With that he rushed to her bed, flung his arms around her, and they embraced and kissed each other passionately. The strain was too great for her. She was overcome and died in his adulterous arms. How did her soul fare in judgment before the all-pure and all-holy God?

Girls Riding with Married Men

Here a word may be inserted regarding the practice that seems to be quite frequent today, in pursuance of the civil emancipation of woman, of girls riding to or from their place of work in an automobile, as the companion or guest of a married man, who may be their employer, foreman, co-worker, neighbor or acquaintance. While one may not categorically and sweepingly denounce this practice for

everyone and in every case—as it may be perfectly permissible and respectable in a given instance—yet as a general rule, the less this is done, the better for both parties, not only with a view to their virtue and their personal and domestic peace, but also for their reputation and standing in the community.

Many an innocent and seemingly harmless and justifiable ride has blasted a fair name and ruined the possession or the prospects of great happiness. Such riding should never be indulged in but with the full knowledge and hearty consent of the girl's mother and the man's wife. It seems when both these parties concur in holding the practice to be unobjectionable, there is no ground for a third and uninterested party to meddle in and suspect harm and evil. Yet even in such a favorable conjuncture a wise girl, who is jealous of her unspotted reputation, and who aims to avoid even the scandal of the weak, rather foregoes the ride with a married man, albeit at the price of considerable inconvenience and loss of time. Her peace of mind and immaculate name are worthy of the sacrifice.

Girls Going Out to Lunch with a Married Man

What has been said applies much more forcibly, of course, to the practice of a gir'

going out to lunch with a married man of the type mentioned above. There hardly ever seems to be a sufficient excuse for that. Eating together by choice, when the man pays for both, and even if he should not meet the girl's bill, of its very nature implies a certain closeness and familiarity, however respectable, which ill becomes the parties in question, and which not without reason gives rise to uncomplimentary whisperings and gossip, if it does not lead to more serious consequences and entanglements. For this reason a girl does well in uncompromisingly declining every offer of the sort. This includes an invitation to go unchaperoned to the theatre, to an outing or excursion, with a married man. The fact that he is a brother-in-law, may be but an additional reason to decline. Here the observance of the golden rule renders certain renunciations easy. What you would not like to have done to you—were you a man's wife—by a young girl, do not now do to another man's wife. Besides, an innocent beginning often has a criminal end. Taking personal presents from married men, valuable jewelry, for example, also falls under the same category of prohibition, only with much more weight.

Look for Another Job

It is needless to add that, if certain sinful love-making has started between the girl and the married man under consideration, in the way of the bestowal or exchange of endearments, such as kisses, embraces and similar marks of familiarity and sexual fondness, it is high time for the girl not only to refuse ever again to ride or eat with the man on whatsoever occasion, but also to look for another place of employment, the sooner the better. Even if her new position does not pay her so much as the old one, there is compensation to her in knowing that her virtue is safe, and that she is in no danger of breaking up another's home through incipient or consummated adultery. For the familiarities referred to above usually smack of adultery and are grievously sinful, besides containing in them a strong menace of inveigling the parties into grosser improprieties and of hastening them towards actual adultery.

Everything that has been mentioned in this regard applies with the same force to a young man in his relations with a married woman. There is a lot of wisdom in closely observing the conventions of good society in this matter, which have been agreed upon after a long and thorough experience of the strength and weakness of human nature. Whatever does not look well and can not bear publicity, it is

generally prudent to eschew. When the proper deductions are made for all the fear, anxiety and guilty feeling incidental to them, there is usually but little, if any, pleasure left in these furtive meetings and ambiguous rendezvous and parties. Never do anything which keeps you from holding your head high and defying the censure of whomsoever.

Bathing Beaches and Camps

In this connection comes to mind another phase of modern life that is fraught with great dangers to the morality of young people, and of older people, too, for that matter. I am referring to the pleasure resorts and camps that are used for vacationing. Somehow a high degree of unconventionality and familiarity between the sexes prevails in many of these places. Persons who are very virtuous and sensitively correct at home easily throw all their reserve, delicacy and dignity to the winds on the bathing beaches and in camp life; never to their moral improvement and their peace of conscience, however. In these places which, after the automobile, constitute the greatest menace to innocence and purity, couples meet and love quite promiscuously and unscrupulously, and often burden their conscience seriously, besides incurring other more or less serious moral misfortunes. Whoever, therefore, is intent on the preservation of innocence, virtue and honor,

will take proper measures and use reliable safeguards when frequenting these places of pleasure and recreation.

You Can Not Get Away from the Ten Commandments

Parents will not allow their sons and daughters to put up at these places without first having satisfied their conscience not only as to the required moral protection and safety of their children, particularly as regards the character of the place and people of the resort or camp, but also as to the children's opportunity and willingness to hear Sunday Mass and in general to live as conscientious Catholics while they are away from home. The Commandments of God and the Church follow the Catholic everywhere and all the time, and they usually need to be especially attended to in the periods and places of general relaxation, diversion and amusement.

Having mentioned bathing beaches, I may add in the interest of the pure-minded girls who are reading this book, that if they, from motives of maidenly dignity and Christian modesty, immovably abstain from every participation in, and endorsement of, the so-called bathing beauty contests, they will do their part in keeping womanhood on the high pedestal of purity, innocence and honor.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mixed Marriages

PART ONE

"Bear not the yoke with unbelievers . . . What fellowship hath light with darkness? . . . Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?" (2 *Cor.*, 6, 14, 15.)

WE ARE now come to a subject, the interest in which is wide and pronounced: the question of mixed marriages, or marriages of Catholics to non-Catholics. This topic calls for cautious handling because of the sensitiveness of those who are on the point of contracting, or are getting ready to enter, this kind of a marriage. If they have lost control of their love and are blind to reason and good sense, whatever may be said as a warning will be lost on them. But if their judgment still has some sway over their hearts and feelings, they may be influenced to have regard for their future well-being and happiness, to look well before they leap and, in case they become aware that they were about to make a most risky and

perilous leap, to dismiss the thought of it completely, and to turn to a more favorable proposition for their good fortune.

The Church Is a Kind Mother

The Church is a most kind, thoughtful and considerate mother. She never makes laws to burden and harass her children, but only to consult their moral and religious welfare and happiness. This is the aim of all her enactments. Moreover the Church has the experience of nineteen hundred years to back her in her dealings with souls and in making wholesome provision for their safety in this life and the next. She very definitely and most insistently forbids any of her children to marry a non-Catholic, and only recedes from this prohibition under compulsion for a serious and urgent cause. She requires a substantial reason, involving the relative welfare of her children, before she grants a dispensation from her law.

And even when she grants the dispensation, her conduct with reference to the mixed marriage is one of reluctance and coercion. She acts in a way as did the father of the Prodigal Son, when the youth thoughtlessly demanded his part of the inheritance to go into a far off country, away from his father and his home. He gave the boy the money very unwillingly, feeling that his very yielding would but give

the boy room to plunge himself into misery. Thus the Church acts when she is forced, so to speak, to grant a dispensation for a mixed marriage. Whilst she allows it, she seems to fear lest her permission might be an occasion for the Catholic party to go far away from home, namely from the Church and from God. So many of her children have been lost to her and to God in this manner that she never tolerates a mixed marriage without fearing lest the Catholic subject may soon, in consequence of the marriage, become a prodigal spiritually and religiously. Her sad experience in the matter has made her justly suspicious and fearful.

The Prenuptial Pledges

Above all, she requires certain prenuptial pledges, not only by word of mouth, but in writing, duly signed by the non-Catholic party in the presence of the Catholic priest, who is to witness the wedding ceremony. The non-Catholic must solemnly promise, first, that he or she will place no hindrance in the way of the practice of the holy faith on the part of the Catholic mate; and second, that all the children of the marriage will be baptized and brought up in the Catholic faith. The Catholic party is to do all in his or her power, to bring about the sincere conversion to the faith of the non-Catholic mate.

The very fact, that she insists on these promises being made in writing, and on the document being carefully kept by the priest for purposes of future reference and verification, is an evident protest on the part of the Church, that she has good reasons, from her past sad experiences, for distrusting the mere verbal promises of non-Catholics in so important a matter.

She Is Very Uneasy

The Church betrays her reluctance and uneasiness in the entire ceremony of a mixed marriage. Her manner is mainly one of silent protest, more negative than positive, yet highly emphatic for anyone who understands the psychology of human conduct. She does not publish the banns or announce the marriage in church. She seems to be ashamed of it. Officially and publicly she takes no notice of the marriage whatever, save that she tolerates the pastor or his delegate to be the merest witness to the cold ceremony, and has him to make the proper entries in the official books of the church.

She does not allow the marriage to be celebrated in the church. The ceremony usually takes place in the rectory. She permits no blessing of the ring or the couple, and withholds from the bride that beautiful blessing which

she speaks over the bride during the nuptial Mass. She says no prayers whatever for the conjugal happiness of the couple. She does not have the priest to wear sacred vestments; not even the surplice and stole. She uses no holy water and no candles. She does nothing that bespeaks joy, comfort or hope, but her whole attitude betrays fear, suspicion and distrust.

Her Feelings Are Violated

Evidently at this marriage the Church is under a great strain, and considerable violence is done to her feelings. She seems to wince under the apprehension of the terrible consequences this marriage may have for the Catholic party, in whose temporal and eternal welfare she has an intense motherly interest. In view of what she has suffered in the past from mixed marriages, it is not hard to understand and approve of her plaintive and regretful attitude. She has a premonition at such a marriage as though she may be witnessing the funeral of a soul very dear to her heart. Just yesterday (June 10, 1927,) I heard of a Protestant parish in one of our cities which is made up almost completely of defections from the Catholic faith, brought on directly or indirectly through mixed marriages. Can you blame the Church for stopping so heavy and disastrous a leak in the

ark of salvation, and thereby forestalling the spiritual death of many immortal souls?

Very Rare Exceptions

There are, it is true, some mixed marriages that develop fortunately, also for the Catholic party. Some of my young readers may spring from such a marriage, and they may be at a loss to account for the positive aversion the Church has to such marriages. Others may recall similar cases among their married relatives, friends or acquaintances. It occurs frequently that the non-Catholic partner after the marriage converts to the faith sooner or later, and becomes a most exemplary Catholic. In other instances, in which no conversion takes place, the tenor of married life is easy and smooth; there is no argument at all about religion, nor any coldness of mutual sentiment because of it; and the non-Catholic husband, far from hampering his wife and children in the free exercise of their holy faith, does what he can to encourage and assist them in it.

Nine to One

If no mixed marriage ever turned out favorably for the Catholic party, the Church would not and could not tolerate it for any reason whatsoever. Under compulsion she gives the Catholic petitioner the benefit of the doubt.

But the chances in favor of the Catholic party are in reality very small, if there are any. Experience bears me out in saying, that nine out of ten mixed marriages are directly or indirectly disastrous for the Catholic party and the offspring of the marriage; and the disaster usually takes the shape of a serious weakening or the complete loss of the holy faith. In any other contract of importance you would not accede to becoming a partner to it, if the chances of success were against you at the ratio of nine to one.

The Fatal Automobile

Say you were to buy an automobile at a great price. When you looked into the experience of those who bought the very same make of car, you would find that nine out of ten soon saw their car partially or completely wrecked. Only one out of ten got any real satisfaction and substantial use from his car, and even he had his trouble and worry with it. And yet all would confess that when they contracted for the car the prospects appeared to be the best; each one was convinced that, whatever adverse experiences others had with that brand of car, their particular type looked so promising that they could entertain no fear whatever regarding its durability and satisfactoriness. But in the end all but one out of ten were

bitterly and permanently disappointed. And the worst was, they had no one but themselves to blame. They had been properly warned against buying the car by experts and connoisseurs in regard to automobiles; and even more by the sad experiences of their predecessors. Yet blindly and stubbornly they staked their good money on so poor and fatuous a bargain. After hearing all of this would you be tempted to invest your money in such a make of car that had odds of nine to one against it? On the head of these statistics alone you would be definitely set against such a car. And no eloquence in the world, and no private fancy of yours could prevail against the cold and freezing eloquence of the statistics. Would that our Catholic young people were equally amenable to conviction in the matter of a infinitely more important bargain: the sacred contract of an indissoluble marriage.

The Fortunate One Is Dangerous

I mentioned that according to experience only one of ten mixed marriages functions favorably for the Catholic party and the children. And this one is only relatively fortunate, in contrast with the nine miserable instances; for even in the fortunate mixed marriage the Catholic party can not but keenly regret the disharmony that exists on the point of religion

between it and the other partner. In a way, however, this one favorable mixed marriage operates more deleteriously than the nine wretched examples; for it gives others who are dallying with the prospect of a mixed marriage the hazardous assurance, that their venture will be equally fortunate; as a result they take the terrible risk merely to be hurled into misfortune and woe. If all mixed marriages without exception turned out to be evidently unhappy and regrettable, Catholics would have to admit that they were wooing disaster outright by attempting one. Now they stake their temporal and eternal happiness on a lonely and forlorn risk, hoping against hope that their attempt will not end in catastrophe.

Insincere Women

Catholic women, who are married to non-Catholic husbands and apparently get on tolerably well, often do much harm by their loud and boastful prating of their happiness in their mixed marriage, and their inveighing against the Church's opposition to mixed marriages. They are often insincere. Their defense of mixed marriages is plainly partisan, biased and colored. They are either not nearly so happy as they pretend to be, or they are not at heart genuinely Catholic women. If they love their holy religion thoroughly, they can not but

wish deep in their hearts, that their consort was a Catholic too, and feel a certain ache because he is not. This the more when they observe the staunch and loyal Catholic husbands of their women friends, who perhaps were their childhood and girlhood pals. When they see these ladies and their Catholic husbands going to Holy Mass, to confession and to Communion together, they can not but feel most keenly their own loneliness and isolation at the divine worship; hence they can not be happy. Or if they are happy nevertheless, their religious sentiments are obviously dampened and dulled, and the ordinary fatal consequences of a mixed marriage have evidently begun to tell on them. Consequently, although in their better moments they know they have made a big mistake, they are not willing to admit it; but they try to convince themselves and others, that they have done just the right thing, and have nothing to regret. And thus they often weaken good Catholic girls, who are tempted to venture into a mixed marriage, in their opposition to it, and are indirectly the cause of the wretchedness that will be likely to overtake them. Not being satisfied to have been unfortunate themselves, these selfish women seem to delight in recruiting others as companions in their misery. Theirs is neither a noble nor a creditable endeavor.

Why the Difference?

There are other marriages which the Church forbids for good reasons, yet the contracting of which she allows for sufficient grounds; for instance, the marriage between cousins. Once she grants the dispensation for the marriage, she is willing to surround it with all her ritual solemnity even as any canonical marriage. Why, then, does she use so much aloofness and coldness with regard to a mixed marriage, after she grants the dispensation for it? Why the difference in her conduct on these occasions? In one class of marriages, such as those between cousins, there is, in addition to certain moral misgivings, ground for fear lest the offspring may be corporally or mentally deficient. In a mixed marriage, however, there is far greater danger of the complete loss of the Catholic faith, not only on the part of the offspring, but also of the Catholic partner to the marriage; and this evil is immensely worse than the other. It is far less sad for a child to be born blind, for example, than to be born with no appreciable chance for the light of the holy faith and, consequently, to be practically doomed to spiritual and religious blindness. The true faith is the most precious gift of God, and whatever marriage seriously jeopardizes its retention and proper transmission, the Church can not but frown on and discountenance to the limit of her power.

Missionaries Get Into a Fury

These are strong words. Many Catholics even can not account for them. They often wonder why priests and especially missionaries work themselves into such a heat of oratorical frenzy and fury whenever they descant on mixed marriages. These Catholics see no reason for all that warmth, intensity and animation. They are convinced people are after all going to marry whom they please, regardless of what the priests say: hence, why the big waste of words, energy and ardor? They do no good when expended upon this thankless subject. Why, then, not employ them where they will benefit someone and bear fruit?

Many Still Have Common Sense

It is alas true, that some Catholic young people, who are stubbornly blind to their own welfare, meet the best meant warnings against mixed marriages with a contemptuous sneer, to their own detriment and regret, as a rule. But there are also many others who, even though they are already in love with a non-Catholic, are still open-minded and docile with reference to their future temporal and eternal happiness. And once the menace of their position is made clear to them, they do not shrink from making the biggest sacrifice of their lives

by discontinuing company with one they sincerely and intensely love, for the sake of their holy faith, the possession of which they prize far above any conjugal union by which it might be endangered even in the remotest manner. Hard as it appears or is for the moment, God not only gives them the strength to go through with the sacrifice with a high degree of spiritual consolation and joy, but He also rewards them by bestowing upon them the favor of a match with a splendid Catholic mate in every way preferable to the one they renounce for the sake of Him. No one has ever equalled, let alone exceeded, God in generosity.

Pluck Out That Perilous Eye

Young people dallying with the thought of a mixed marriage, far from taking the dissuasive frown of the Church at their conduct amiss, will rather bear in mind and appreciate the fact, that the Church's law against mixed marriages was made not to obstruct their real happiness but to promote it; not to ruin them, but to save them; not to deprive them of a good fortune, but to shield them against evil fortune. If she asks them to dismiss forever from their hearts a great love for a non-Catholic person whom they are strongly, even fiercely inclined to marry, she merely gives plastic and

concrete expression to the warning words of our Lord Who says: "And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. . . . And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell" (Matt., 5, 29, 30).

The Law Is All in Their Favor

It is therefore wise for these young people to remember, that the law is primarily made in their own personal favor. The Church will go along on her way undisturbed and undiminished in strength, whether this or that young man or young lady is lost to her through a mixed marriage or not: but the young person himself or herself will likely not fare so well; and it is about their welfare that the Church is mostly concerned. Young people make a big mistake by thinking they are asked merely to do the Church the favor of disencumbering themselves of the danger of a mixed marriage: they are rather asked to confer this favor upon themselves and thereby consult their own welfare.

If a surgeon of high repute bade you to have your eye removed through an operation in order to preserve your sight or your life, you would not judge you were doing him a favor

by submitting to the operation. If you had any sense, you would thank him heartily for having advised you of the danger betimes and thereby saved your sight or even your life. Similarly a young person trifling with a possible mixed marriage ought to be very grateful to the Church for her timely warning to pluck out the perilous eye; and even much more so for this reason: the physician can not replace the eye he has taken out with another living eye; but, as was said above, God loves to replace a love that was sacrificed for Him by another deeper, greater, sweeter and more sacred love for a desirable and acceptable Catholic partner.

It is unnecessary to state that, in her prohibition of mixed marriages, the Church is not at all led by any reflection on the person or character of the non-Catholic party. She is willing to admit that in a given case this party may be most excellent and estimable and irreproachable personally. She knows, too, that often non-Catholic young people are more moral, virtuous, noble and trustworthy than many Catholics are. This is beside the point, and she does not pass on it at all. Her only objection is based on the reference to the true religion, which she considers as the main and most important condition for the real and lasting success and happiness of marriage.

One Flesh, One Heart, One Mind

They who are minded to be so closely aligned as to become two in one flesh, should have no serious obstruction in becoming two in one mind, one heart and one soul; for the couple's happiness, if it will have any, will consist more in the union of their souls than of their bodies. But complete and satisfying soul-union is impossible between two persons who are estranged on the elementary article of religion. As long as this estrangement lasts, they can not be really and truly one in heart and mind.

Whoever, therefore, is a true friend to a non-Catholic, for the same reason cautions him or her against marrying a Catholic. The prospect of their marital happiness is meagre and precarious at the best; and usually the result is heartache, misery and woe for both parties. Ordinary intelligence appreciates the truth of this assertion, and the fact alone, that uncontrolled love often blinds the intellect of those concerned, accounts for the large number of mixed marriages, most of which have a more or less fatal ending.

The True Religion Can Not Compromise

Other differences can be overlooked and, through mutual concessions, easily sacrificed. In every marriage certain adjustments of the

partners to it take place no sooner it is contracted, provided they have virtue and good sense. They agree on reciprocally giving up some of their likes and dislikes for the sake of one another. But religion is too essential an element of life, it grips the soul too deeply and completely, as to be easily passed up or readily forfeited. The Catholic religion brooks no concessions or tolerates no compromises in essentials; for this reason, the non-Catholic party hardly ever being sympathetic with this view of the matter, it is obvious that a disharmony or a clash of some kind will soon be inevitable.

He Aims to Be Cute

It may not break out openly, but in secret the Catholic party who is jealous of her faith will often suffer most keenly; which will be the harder, the more she has to hide the very fact that she is suffering at all. Her non-Catholic husband will often throw out a remark or a joke regarding her faith without any intention of stinging her; he merely wants to be witty or cute, not having any conception of how sensitive the Catholic soul is regarding the faith and whatever concerns it; and she is cut to the heart, and bitter anguish encompasses her soul; again the more, the less she is allowed to disclose it, in order not to disrupt the peace of the conjugal bond.

Although they apply to both, I am restricting these remarks on a mixed marriage to the Catholic girl, as I intend later on to pay my respects to the Catholic young man who marries a non-Catholic girl.

Love Opens Every Lock

If love, according to the poet, is not only a part of a woman's life, but her whole existence, religion is not less so in regard to a woman who is thoroughly Catholic. Her faith, especially in the responsibilities and trials of marriage, which are known to be greater for a woman than for a man, is her whole existence. If she is unduly hampered in its exercise or pursuit, or even if she is not given any encouragement in its practice by the one she loves most in the world, she feels that something essential is wanting in her life, and her very love for her mate can not but suffer in consequence. They say, that love can open every lock and solve every difficulty in life: this is very true. provided the lovers use the same key and turn it the same way. Where, however, they either run counter to one another through dissonance in their religious beliefs, or where one leaves the other coldly alone to pursue her belief unabetted and unendorsed, the law of the omnipotence of love ceases to function. It remains a case of the one turning the key one way, the

other the contrary way, if not through open opposition, at least through cold aloofness and apathy.

Genuine Catholic Girls: Beware!

As is evident from what I have said, I am having in mind girls who are heart and soul addicted to their Catholic faith and who, if it came to a show-down, would rather lose their fortune, happiness and life than surrender their religion. Catholic girls who, in flirting with a possible mixed marriage, care very little if they will lose their faith or not, have already lost it in their hearts. At any rate, they are not the kind to read this book; hence I need not consider them.

But I want to warn the first class of girls not to allow a war to be waged in their hearts between the love of a non-Catholic husband and the love of their holy faith. In this battle the odds are altogether against the faith. Conjugal love is a thing of the senses and the passions: hence, if it is given full sway, it affects a girl stronger and deeper than her faith, which is supersensible or spiritual. And the more she loves her non-Catholic husband, the greater is the danger of her being gradually weaned away from her holy faith, not because of any positive insistence on his part, but because of her great love, which inclines her to

please him and to become like to him in all things. And since he has no mind to embrace her faith—he seldom has—she will gradually drop it too in order to eliminate the discord between them.

A Woman's Heart Is Stronger than Her Mind

A woman's mind is very easily and powerfully influenced by her heart. And if a non-Catholic husband controls a Catholic woman's heart and absorbs it completely, it is no strain on her mind at all soon to be convinced, that after all one faith is as good as the other, and it matters little what one believes or if one believes at all, just so love rules life and the golden rule is observed all round. In other words, the Catholic faith goes a-glimmering and ere she is aware of it, it is extinguished. Had she only not loved so much! or, rather, had she only chosen a Catholic partner as the object of so much love!

From the foregoing we gather—in view of the many sad evidences of it that are observable throughout our country—that there is a distinct possibility of a Catholic girl getting on with her non-Catholic husband far too well for her own good: for a brief and questionable temporal happiness she forfeits her eternal bliss. In this connection the words of St. Paul

come to mind: "Bear not the yoke [of marriage] with unbelievers. For . . . what fellowship hath light with darkness? . . . Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?" (2 Cor., 6, 14, 15.) The word "yoke" in the text is significant. In this country yokes of oxen are not often seen. But everyone knows this much of a yoke that, if the partners to it are going to achieve anything worth while and to their comfort, they have to draw in the same direction and at the same time. If one draws in the opposite direction from the other, not only will nothing whatever be accomplished, but the yoke itself will soon be rent asunder. This is a pregnant picture of a mixed marriage and its sad consequences, given by God Himself in the Bible. And no one knows human psychology as God knows it.

Worse Even than Divorce

But once more I must emphasize, that a worse catastrophe than the severance of the marital yoke, or divorce, can happen to the Catholic mate of a mixed marriage. This would take place, if both would draw in the same direction, with apparent harmony and contentment, but with the forfeiture of the faith on the part of the Catholic, as was mentioned above. It may sound harsh, but it is infinitely better that a mixed marriage goes pitilessly on

the rocks because of the Catholic wife's loyalty to her faith than that it sail along in smooth comfort and seeming loveliness in consequence of her having practically become a renegade to her religion.

A Mother's Last Words

Some time ago a Catholic woman, married to a non-Catholic man, and getting on nicely, to all appearances, in her mixed marriage, fell seriously ill. When she felt she was about to die, she called her only child, a boy of thirteen, to her bedside. Taking his hand in hers, she said solemnly and feelingly, as she fixed her loving eyes upon him: "My son, promise me that, if you ever marry, you will not marry a non-Catholic." The boy promised, and the sick woman was much relieved. The scene was pathetic. In the face of death, and after her own trying experiences, a mixed marriage looked different to this woman than it did when she was blinded by youthful and ardent love. All the romance of it fled before the cold and sober facts of life and death. How much more miserable would this woman have felt at death, if she had been leaving in the care of the non-Catholic parent not one but several small children, who were likely to have a non-Catholic stepmother ere long. Yet such a sad death is by no means rare in regard to Catholic partners of mixed marriages.

CHAPTER XV.

Mixed Marriages

PART TWO.

"Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph., 4, 3).

A CATHOLIC girl who is devoted to her faith requires only sound common sense to fill her with an insuperable dread of a mixed marriage. She would never think of marrying a gentleman of color: she could never reconcile herself to the difference between them. And still, in marriage the difference of religion often is keener and more oppressive than would be the difference of the color of the skin. A girl who has an aversion for living in the country would never think of marrying a farmer who was bent on staying on the farm; a girl of a fine education would never dream of marrying a man who could not read or write; a girl who is determined to live alone with her husband after marriage definitely balks at marrying a man who has decided to have his mother live with

them; and there is justification in all these tastes and in the consideration taken for their enjoyment.

Woman, the Most Stubborn of Beings

Yet these and similar attachments are insignificant and paltry when compared with the love of a good Catholic girl for her holy faith. Why then should she without further ado override her fondness for her faith and align herself with a man that is out of sympathy with it? Has she a chance of being thoroughly happy and contented? Where is the consistency? They say "woman wants what she wants"; or, as others put it rather disrespectfully, "there's only one being more stubborn than a mule, and that being is woman." Would that our Catholic girls, who feel a propensity to a mixed marriage, showed more of this stubbornness when there is question of safeguarding their faith at any cost. And would that at the same time they would use their reason enough to apprehend, that any appreciable degree of true happiness is out of question in a marriage, the parties to which disagree on the main concern of life, yea, on the very nature of marriage itself, the Catholic party holding it to be a great sacrament, while the non-Catholic party merely considers it as an ordinary contract, rescindable practically at will, at least in our country.

A Most Sensitive Point

And here I have touched on the item of a mixed marriage which, from a practical and common sense point of view, ought to be a highly sensitive one for, and prevail heavily with, the Catholic party against any such mixed matrimonial alliance: the blatant and flagrant inequality of the marriage contract, with all the odds against the Catholic. She gives herself to her non-Catholic partner for life. For her the marriage bond is indissoluble until death severs it. Nothing will ever qualify her to recede from the bond and marry another man, as long as this man lives, no matter how the marriage may develop or whatever may occur. She makes this consecration through the most sacred pledge of her religion. For her, once married and living in marriage, there will be no other marriage possible "until death do us part".

A Solemn Promise

This is indeed a solemn promise which, she is sure, is registered in heaven. Does her non-Catholic partner make the same promise and mean it in the same degree? He does not and can not, because his promise has not the solemn and formal sanction of religion, as has that of the Catholic girl. In his present love for the girl he may indeed have no other thought than to be her husband until death; but love is

known to be inconstant and often to survive the marriage contract but for only a brief period. And once it cools or dies entirely, when the novelty of married life has worn off, and certain discrepancies of character and disagreements of views render the continuance of marital relations undesirable, the non-Catholic party is usually not slow in fanning what differences there are by open or covert slurs at, and attacks on, the faith of the Catholic party, in order either to force her to procure a civil divorce for her own peace, or to conjure up apparently sufficient grounds to obtain a divorce himself.

Grass Widows

However it is achieved, he loses no time in resorting to another marriage, and is not at pains to disguise his utter scorn and ridicule of her, who is left behind in utter loneliness as a grass widow, without any prospect of another marriage, unless he should die: and this favor he is usually slow in bestowing upon her. At any rate she commonly has plenty of time bitterly to regret having been inaccessible to wiser counsel, when its acceptance would have meant the forestalling of poignant and lasting unhappiness. Whoever claims that this is altogether an imaginary case, made to order for oratorical effect, discovers that he is un-

acquainted with a very frequent occurrence of human wreckage. There is hardly a parish of any size in our country that does not record one or more sad instances of it. And there may be grounds for the belief, that non-Catholic young men are often desirous of getting Catholic girls for their wives, because all the odds of marriage will be in their own favor.

They Are Unconscious

Be this as it may, what sensible Catholic girl would ever dream of entering into so one-sided a contract, with every handicap against her, in any other matter whatsoever? She could never be induced to such folly, even if only twenty-five cents were involved. The very injustice and unfairness of the bargain would revolt her. In her conscious and sober moments she would never admit it. How is it, then, that so many of our Catholic girls not only accept but frequently even invite a transaction so unilateral and decidedly unfavorable to themselves with regard to the most important and consequential relations of life? There's only one answer: They are really, in the slang phrase of the day, unconscious. For the moment their blind love has dethroned their reason. But woe to them when this love dies and calm judgment resumes its sway under the influence of the cold and hard facts of real life!

Receive Him Not in the House

For this reason particularly, when a Catholic girl is flirting with the danger of a mixed marriage, one is justified in admonishing her in the words of St. John, the disciple of love: "If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine [the true faith], receive him not into the house nor say to him, God speed you" (2 John, 1, 10). For having heeded this wise caution betimes, keenly as it hurt her at the moment to turn her non-Catholic lover forever away from her home, many a Catholic maiden—and this can not be repeated too often—was soon rewarded by the appearance of a worthy Catholic suitor, who developed into an ideal husband for her.

It seems harsh, it is true, if not cruel, for a Catholic girl to shut her house to a non-Catholic man who is sincere in his esteem, love and desire of her. Yet she consults her own temporal and eternal interests more by denying him her house from motives of conscience now, before they are married, than by having him eject her, perhaps, from their house after they are married, in consequence of the marital disunion which is known to be so common a part and parcel of mixed marriages.

Not a few Catholic girls, who have been keeping company for some time with non-Catholic lovers, and who are even engaged to marry them, consider it the height of disloyalty

and dishonor to part company with and definitely dismiss them. Nothing seems more contrary to true love than this cold and heartless procedure, and they think the Church should not ask so unnatural a conduct of its children.

You Love Him Best by Quitting Him

And yet, in practically every case, these Catholic girls exhibit more real and genuine love to their non-Catholic suitors by discontinuing courtship with them, than by progressing with them to what will most likely be an unhappy marriage. If the girls quit them through sheer love of them, these non-Catholic men may eventually marry non-Catholic girls with immensely better prospects of connubial concord and bliss. Hence, if your love for your non-Catholic wooer is genuine, warm and deep, and aims only at his best interest, prove it by getting out of his life once for all, so he has a better chance to pursue nuptial contentment, peace and joy. Speak to him after the manner of Abraham who said to his nephew Lot: "Let there be no quarrel, I beseech thee, between me and thee . . . for we are brethren. Behold the whole land is before thee: depart from me, I pray thee: if thou wilt go to the left hand, I will take the right: if thou choose the right hand, I will pass to the left . . . And they were

separated, one . . . from the other" (Gen., 13, 8 sqq.). And even as this painful separation accrued to the benefit of both, especially of Abraham, so your separation, for the love of God, will benefit you both, especially yourself.

Help in Religion

Marriage, as every Catholic girl knows, is intended by God to provide a mutual help for both husband and wife. "God said: It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself" (Gen., 2, 18). God made woman so she might be a help to man. Correlatively, man was to be a help to woman. If husband and wife are to be a help to one another in any sphere, it is in the achievement of their eternal goal, for this is the one thing that counts. Consequently, a Catholic girl who marries looks for help from her husband particularly in the practice of her holy faith. Good and devout as she may be, encouragement and stimulation in the exercise of her religion will always avail and benefit her much. From a non-Catholic husband she ordinarily will receive no encouragement, but a great deal of discouragement, sometimes positively, almost always negatively.

In this feature of married life, which is paramount, she will at most have to carry the yoke alone, without any help from her partner. And

the best and strongest carrier tires of bearing the yoke alone, and grows disheartened and weary under the burden. Why then marry a man for the help he is going to give, when it is apparent from the beginning, that he can not be counted on for any help whatsoever towards what is most precious and most necessary, the practice of the true religion? You would never think of marrying a man of whom you could expect no conjugal love, for instance, or no material support: this consideration alone would suffice to put him outside of the pale of your consideration once and forever. Why not be consistent and follow the same rule regarding the lack of religious help? Often it would be far easier and less baneful to forego the other aforesaid helps than the religious assistance. Why, then, should this not fall heavier in the balance, when a Catholic girl is tempted to marry a non-Catholic? Why should good judgment serve us everywhere else save in our appraisal of religious and everlasting values?

Before and After

Before her marriage to a non-Catholic a Catholic girl can hardly appreciate adequately her lack of religious help in marriage. She usually thinks only of going to church on Sunday and to the sacraments occasionally. She feels that as long as her husband does not hinder her

in these two duties, everything will be satisfactory. And he will certainly not object to her doing these two things. Consequently, why worry?

But even regarding those two religious performances circumstances after marriage will hardly favor her as much as she expects. And very often she will not be as able to go to Mass and Holy Communion as she imagines. Her non-Catholic mate may put all kinds of undreamed-of obstacles in the way, and raise all sorts of objections to what he may style her fanaticism or religious frenzy. There are ever so many cases of this everywhere today. Especially after the arrival of one or more children does the performance of the aforesaid duties frequently become hard to the Catholic mother. Her husband will seldom be willing to get up early Sunday morning and take care of the children while she goes to church. He can not see the point as the Catholic husband sees it. And she will have additional cause for worry, dissatisfaction and regret.

There Are Other Duties

Yet there is a great deal more to the practice of the Catholic faith than merely going to Mass and Holy Communion. There are certain principles of conjugal morality which the Catholic must hold sacred, but which are often sneered

at by non-Catholics. Often the Catholic woman is intent on doing only what is right in marriage, and she is heart and soul averse to the sinful restriction of the family through unlawful birth-control in every shape and form: yet it is impossible for her to induce her non-Catholic consort to espouse or follow the sacred ethics of the Catholic Church and of God. He will insist on doing just as he pleases, whether she likes it or not. This does not make for her peace of mind. And if she should chance to mention that, in case she connived at his sin against holy marriage, she would have to accuse herself of it in the confessional, he would likely launch a vicious and most offensive tirade against what she holds most sacred and most dear, and her most intimate sensibilities would be keenly shocked.

The question of the baptism and Catholic education of the children of a mixed marriage is known to be one of the most delicate problems, and productive of endless domestic quarrels, feuds and estrangements. So too, although perhaps in a lesser degree, the Catholic party's duty of contributing towards the support of the Church. This begets many ugly discussions and much obnoxious wrangling. And if the Catholic parent dies when the children are young, what will become of their religion, especially if the surviving parent marries a non-Catholic?

A Mere Scrap of Paper

Nor am I forgetting, that one of the conditions the Church insists on before she tolerates a mixed marriage is the signed statement of the non-Catholic party, that he will permit his Catholic wife to exercise her religion freely, and the children to be brought up in the Catholic faith. But these signed statements are treated as a rule as the proverbial scrap of paper, and have no practical value or influence. Some time ago I heard of a mixed marriage taking place in a city rectory. The pastor who witnessed the marriage gave the non-Catholic groom a copy of his written statement so he could refer to it every now and then. He no sooner got outside of the door after the ceremony, when he showed the paper to his wife, saying not without considerable scorn: "Do you see this foolish piece of paper? There it is!" And he tore it to shreds. Not all non-Catholic husbands of Catholic wives tell their minds so soon and so defiantly. But sooner or later very many of them forget or simply ignore their prenuptial promises. Experience is the best teacher; and it is overwhelming in its arraignment of mixed marriages as they actually develop, as far as the rights and welfare of the Catholic party are concerned.

An Attitude of Paternalism

When these husbands keep their promises, however, they often assume a patronizing attitude towards their wives, as though they were conferring a favor upon them by allowing them and the children to go to church at all; and they generally expect a substantial consideration in return. They love to pose as creditors to whom their wives are continually in debt for their toleration of the practice of the Catholic faith in their homes. This attitude is not apt to flatter the dignity and self-respect of Catholic women.

The subjects touched upon pertain to the essence and substance of Catholic practice. But to the exercise of the Catholic religion there is still another side of considerable moment, especially for the Catholic woman. It is the element of religious solace, pleasure and joy. This is usually denied her altogether in a mixed marriage. I said above that for a Catholic woman who loves her faith, her religion is her whole existence. This is perhaps even more true of good Catholic married women who instinctively turn to their religion for solace and help in the outstanding feminine trials and hardships of wedded life.

She Likes to Talk Religion

Whenever a woman loves her faith, she delights in speaking of it and discussing the sweet

mysteries of it again and again, especially in her home with those she loves most. She likes to tell of her spiritual experiences and visitations at prayer, at Holy Mass, and at the reception of the sacraments. There is no subject nearer her heart. She enjoys a conversation on religion more than talks on fashions and styles, or gossip on neighborhood characters and occurrences. Religious conversation has a way of soothing, bracing, elevating and animating her. But when she is married to a non-Catholic husband, there is no room or opportunity in her home for such conversations. The subject of religion is usually carefully and even painfully eschewed in order not to hurt or provoke the feelings of the non-Catholic partner. Inferentially, too, Catholic literature, in the form of books, magazines and papers, is meagerly, if at all, represented in such a home.

Altars and Shrines

The little daily domestic acts of religion on the part of a Catholic couple or family also contain in them elements of sweet comfort and genuine joy for a Catholic woman: the family prayer, the table prayers, the personal prayers of the individual family members, the little altars and shrines, the rosaries and medals, the holy water and candles, and especially the crucifix: these and other emblems of our holy

faith play a conspicuous part in the home of a good Christian wife. Where the husband is not of the faith, however, a certain restraint and timidity regarding the use of these things are usually imposed upon her, as he does not understand, and may easily take offense. Seventeen hundred years ago Tertullian, in Africa, described beautifully and touchingly the domestic religious life of a Catholic couple: how they sign themselves with the same sign of the cross, say their prayers together, and grace before and after meals, chant hymns and converse on the ways of the Lord, and how they mutually encourage one another in the life of and for God. Where one of the partners is not a Catholic, such a pretty picture of the home is incapable of reproduction, much to the sorrow and grief of the pious Christian woman.

She Does Not Marry the Family

A Catholic girl who marries a non-Catholic does not marry his entire family, it is true; but she will find it to make for her happiness if her husband's family is sympathetic and congenial to her, and is eager to remain on kindly and friendly terms with her. This is seldom possible when her husband's people are non-Catholics. They usually are averse to the marriage in the first place, and they will not easily surrender their prejudices against the Catholic

faith in her favor, but rather observe an air of suspiciousness, aloofness and coldness with reference to her. And not infrequently they will directly or indirectly stir her husband against her on religious grounds. Here again experience is a sad but emphatic teacher. At any rate, when calling on or receiving them she must cautiously avoid the subject of religion, or speak of it in a way that brings no joy to her heart; since she must be continually answering the most outlandish questions regarding her Church and its practices, and is usually put on the defensive explaining why this or that is done or not done by Catholics. This apologetic attitude regarding her holy faith will delight her as little as it will benefit her.

She Wants to Be Chummy

But where the relations of a Catholic woman with the non-Catholic relatives of her husband become and remain very hearty, tender and close, she again runs a great risk of diluting her own Catholic faith in profession as well as practice in order to appear conciliatory, broad-minded, liberal and chummy. She will then be fortunate if she remains a Catholic at all.

What I am here saying, what I have already said, and what I am still going to say, no doubt sounds like rank bigotry and fanaticism to those who practically hold that in the end one

religion is as good as the other: but it sounds like good common sense, I hope, to those who are convinced that the Catholic faith is the only true and the one saving faith of Jesus Christ, and is therefore deserving of every sacrifice and wise safeguard for its preservation in its purity and strength.

A Girl Marries to Suit Herself

A Catholic girl does not marry to suit her family, but to suit herself. Still a good girl in making a matrimonial match loves to consider her family, especially her parents, as much as is compatible with her own happiness. She wants them to derive all possible and reasonable joy and gratification from her alliance. She usually precludes all such joy when she marries a non-Catholic. If her parents are genuine Catholics, they can not but be pained at the very thought of the spiritual danger she is courting through the match. But even if they should reconcile themselves to it, they usually have little or nothing in common with their non-Catholic son-in-law and his family connections. The older they grow, the more importance religion assumes in their eyes, and the less congeniality they find with one or in a circle where the subject of their holy faith is tabooed, at least through reasons of courtesy and policy.

Is the Church Too Strict?

I am putting the matter strongly, I own; but by no means too strongly. Some time ago a Catholic woman, the wife of a non-Catholic and the mother of a large family, complained bitterly to me, that the Church tolerates mixed marriages at all. She wished the Church had never allowed them: then she herself would today not be in the misery she suffers. Ever so many Catholic wives of mixed marriages say the same, now that they are most unhappily married. Before they married they were convinced the Church was too strict and narrow in her attitude against marriages. Now they feel the Church is not nearly strict enough. They can not blame the Church, however; they have only themselves and, sometimes, their parents to blame. There are parents, mothers particularly, who are eager to have their daughters marry the sooner the better, to a Catholic or non-Catholic, regardless of the consequences. Such parents are not the guardian angels of their children, and they often live to rue most bitterly their lack of vigilance and prudence in giving their sons and daughters in marriage.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mixed Marriages

PART THREE.

"*Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God*" (*Mark*, 10, 14).

IF our Catholic girls had only themselves to consider in contracting a mixed marriage, the matter would not be so serious. After all, everyone is the arbiter of her own fate and, if a certain girl wilfully chooses to toy with danger and misfortune, it is, in many cases, her own personal affair. She alone will have to pay the price.

Not so, however, when she becomes a party to a mixed marriage. Then the temporal and eternal fate of other prospective immortal beings is directly and closely involved in her act, namely the children whose mother God destines her one day to be. As the offspring of a mixed marriage, there is reason to fear, that they will be the greatest sufferers.

In case the marriage is ill-fated and ends in divorce, the lot of the children will be very unenviable. If the married parties stay together somehow, in spite of many dissensions and wranglings, in which the subject of religion usually plays a prominent part, the education of the children will be seriously handicapped through the lack of union and harmony between the parents. The children will be fortunate, if they are baptized by the priest, and are allowed to attend the Catholic school, and pursue their religious duties at all.

The Father's Example

And even if the non-Catholic parent behaves honorably, and puts no hindrance in the way of the practice of their holy religion on the part of his wife and children, they will still miss the influence of his own wholesouled and potent personal example and cooperation in their religious practices, which mean so much to children who love their father, and which can not be supplied or substituted by whatsoever piety of the mother.

The fact alone, that their father for whom, as we are supposing, the children have the highest esteem, disbelieves in the doctrines they are told to believe with all their heart and mind, as being revealed by God Himself, and altogether ignores the Holy Sacrifice of Mass

and the sacraments, on the attendance at and the reception of which they are taught that eternal salvation depends, will militate against the depth, vigor and fervor of their Catholic faith and practice. And the better and nobler man their father is, and the fonder and prouder they are of him, the less tenacious and thorough-going will their religion likely be.

A Diluted Catholicity

It is therefore observable in such marriages, that the Catholic wife often, and the children almost always, have a weak and diluted Catholic faith, owing to the fact that their love for their husband and father, respectively, inclines them to be obnoxiously broadminded and liberal in their own religious profession. You usually find them not to have positive Catholic views on the school question, for instance, or with reference to mixed marriages—since their parents did so well—and, in consequence, if not the first, at least the second generation of such a marriage is frequently lost to the faith entirely.

A Believing and an Unbelieving Father

The gospel records that one day Jesus cured the son of a ruler. Learning of the miracle, the ruler "himself believed, and his whole house" (John, 4, 53). The believing father drew his

entire family and household to the faith. Such is the influence of a father's faith. Contrariwise, an unbelieving father easily and almost always is directly or indirectly the cause of the gradual weakening and the complete loss of the faith on the part of one or more of his children, and not seldom of their mother.

When one reflects, that the faith once lost in one generation may never be recovered in all of the subsequent generations to the end of time, one is more and more staggered by the terrible risk and frightful responsibility so many of our Catholic girls take upon themselves lightheartedly and haphazardly, even as though they were taking a ten cent chance on a radio or a victrola. It is here, however, where the girl pays, usually with bitter tears and convulsive heart-pangs, as long as she lives and, alas, often in eternity, too. Thousands of non-Catholics in this country are bereft of the true faith merely because their ancestors forfeited it through a mixed marriage.

The Last Sorry Link of a Glorious Chain

To be the last link in the glorious chain of the true faith of Christ in a family is as terrible a disgrace as it is a tremendous responsibility. Your Catholic faith has come to you through countless centuries, covering a period of over a thousand years, from generation to generation.

Your forefathers and foremothers made heroic sacrifices of comfort, fortune and life to preserve this holy faith staunch, pure and unalloyed for themselves and their descendants. More than once, perhaps, they renounced a much more tempting offer of a mixed marriage than is now luring you, merely not to jeopardize the priceless gift of faith for themselves and their children. And are you now going to be the last sorry link in this splendid transmission of the faith of Christ? Are you going to risk losing it forever for yourself and your offspring? Are you going to chance being confronted with so crushing a responsibility on the day of reckoning, when the just Judge will charge you sternly, saying: "Give an account of thy stewardship"? (Luke, 16, 2.)

No Longer a Mere Lottery

Here again I may be reminded, that some mixed marriages terminate quite favorably and, since marriage at its best is a lottery, as is generally admitted, why should a girl who is minded to play this lottery not take the risk of a mixed marriage as well? Because the chances in her favor are so slim, and she stakes so much that her venture is positively fatuous; she is no longer playing a lottery, but she is displaying folly.

Say a girl, in a tantrum of nervousness, were about to pitch herself from a ten-story window of a hotel on the street pavement. When her mother tried to restrain her by pointing out that by such a plunge she was courting the danger of either dying on the spot or of being a cripple for life, she would answer, that there had been some girls who leaped from great heights without serious harm to themselves; why then should she fear? Yet fortunately the girl would yield to her mother's warning and forego the jump, much as she was inclined to make it in her nervous agitation.

In a Tantrum of Love

Later on, when the girl came to and in her moments of calm and poised judgment, realized the great peril she was in, would she not thank her mother from her heart for having saved her from it, and congratulate herself warmly on having acquiesced in her mother's better judgment? She would shudder at the very thought of her ominous folly and impetuosity. Even so many a Catholic girl who, in consequence of a strong love, is in an emotional tantrum, and is about to thrust herself headlong into a dangerous mixed marriage, if she still has staying power enough to listen to the well-meant and wise caution of her parents against the desired marriage, and subdues and dismisses her

blind and dangerous love: oh, how she will thank her parents fervently and wholeheartedly later on when, come to her senses, she realizes all the menace and peril of the match she was about to enter into!

Often a Sham Marriage

So far I have not pointed out another weakness of a mixed marriage which is very serious and deserves to be pondered over by a girl tempted to contract one. The so-called mixed marriage is often not a marriage at all. It is null and void from the very start if the non-Catholic party, for instance, expressly stipulates or declares, that he is merely making a trial of the marriage and, if he finds it does not suit him, he will procure a divorce and marry another woman; or that he marries only for the pleasure of cohabitation to the exclusion of offspring. He would thereby be in conflict with the unity and indissolubility or, relatively, with the very substance of the marriage contract and, inferentially, he would not be consenting to the marriage in the Christian conception of it: and without the proper consent of the contracting parties there can be no marriage.

Just lately there was a celebrated case of such a nullity of marriage, in which a famous inventor was involved. He admitted having

entered marriage with the avowed purpose of receding from it to enter another alliance, if it was found desirable: and on the strength of this avowal his marriage was declared to have been invalid from the beginning. There is reason to fear lest quite a number of mixed marriages are similarly null and void.

Insincerity Invalidates Marriage

If, in contracting a mixed marriage, the parties to it are consciously insincere in promising that the prospective children of the marriage, if any, will be baptized and educated in the Catholic faith, the dispensation for the marriage is thereby nullified. In case the non-Catholic party has never been baptized, the marriage is therefore invalid and sacrilegious. If the non-Catholic party has been baptized, the marriage is valid, but gravely illicit and sacrilegious. This case of positive insincerity with regard to the prenuptial promises required of the candidates for a mixed marriage is not nearly so frequent as is that of laxity and infidelity in keeping these promises after they have been made in seemingly good faith by the non-Catholic as well as the Catholic party.

At all events, the Catholic girl who sincerely loves her holy faith, and who is convinced that her marriage is to copy the grand and sublime

relations existing between Christ and the Church, wants the copy to be as close as possible, and for that reason she insists on having a Catholic husband who believes in the holy sacrament of marriage as she does, and who aims to receive it worthily and be participant of all its powerful graces even like herself. We can not imagine our Lord being aligned to a Church that did not profess the same religious doctrine as He preached, and that did not work for the glory of God after His own manner and fashion. Similarly the Catholic girl feels that something essential were missing in her marital union, if her husband was not altogether at one with her in adoring the same God, in professing the same faith, in assisting at the same sacrifice, and in receiving the same sacraments. Life is short, but eternity lasts forever. What is permanent and perpetual must never be sacrificed, even in remote possibility, to what is transitory and ephemeral.

It is quite remarkable that, in the Bible, in the Old as well as the New Testament, whenever God wants to give the impression of great, deep, all-possessing and beatifying mutual love, He likes to use the love of marriage as an illustration. This love is known as the highest ecstasy, the greatest intimacy, and the strongest reciprocity of love. Hence our Lord used

this figure, through St. Paul, as the symbol of the love existing between Him and His Church. But only the marriage that copies His union with the Church in the unity of religious profession and sacramental communion can hope to reach the zenith of sacred connubial love, and to maintain it enduringly to the end.

Jesus Does Not Like It

There are numerous very practical and matter-of-fact reasons to dissuade a sensible Catholic girl definitely from a mixed marriage; yet it seems to me that the mere love of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be the strongest and of itself a most sufficient motive to inspire her with an insuperable aversion to such a marriage. If a girl sincerely loves her father who has been extremely good and generous to her, she will not as much as consider a matrimonial match which her father does not endorse. She does not want to hurt him; hence she dismisses the very idea of that match. In the same way a Catholic girl, who really and thoroughly loves Jesus, will need no other caution against a mixed marriage than the very thought: "Jesus does not like it." Him she will not displease at any price: hence any further dwelling on such a marriage is not possible to her mind. Nor will she ever regret having made the sacrifice for Jesus' sake. He

will reward her intensely and immensely: ordinarily by bestowing upon her the opportunity of a most blessed, happy and prosperous Catholic marriage. In generosity Jesus suffers no rival.

In the light of all that has been said, we are are now able to make a just appraisal of the pretexts our Catholic girls allege as an excuse for entering a mixed marriage in spite of everything. I do not want to be more Catholic than the Church: hence I should not desire the Church categorically and unyieldingly to prohibit one and all mixed marriages, as many are convinced the Church ought to do. But with the Church I should very positively counsel every Catholic girl against a mixed marriage no matter what the circumstances might be. I can think of no possible lure or apparent advantage that in my mind would begin to counterbalance in her regard all the handicaps and dangers of a mixed marriage.

Her Soul-Mate

The most common reason urging a Catholic girl to contract a mixed marriage is her great love or fascination for the man in question. She loves him too much as to be able to live without him. Her love for him is so great that she will never be capable of loving any other man. He is her life's one and only love. He is her

soul-mate and destined by heaven itself to be her husband. They are evidently made for one another, and nothing must hinder their union.

First of all, she made a serious blunder by ever allowing herself to love a non-Catholic man so violently. It was love at first sight, you say, and I simply could not help myself. What if he had been a married man? Or if after some acquaintance you had found that he was a mere trifling philanderer? Would these or similar revelations not have at once dampened your ardor for him? Why, then, did you not dismiss your love for him when you found out he was not of your faith? You say, this is different. It is different inasmuch as it may not be any fault of his that he is not a Catholic: but there is a certain sameness about it inasmuch as there is an element between you and him that substantially threatens the permanency and happiness of a marriage between you; and this consideration ought to be enough for you to check your love for him at once and dismiss him definitely from your thoughts as a possible matrimonial partner.

Love at First Sight

Moreover, love at first sight in a normal and sensible person is never at once invincibly violent and uncontrollable. It is capable of

being swayed by reason and good sense. But you say your love for him gradually got so strong through further association with him, and before you became aware of the fact that he was not a Catholic. Here we have mention of the great and sad blunder made by so many Catholic girls, who begin to keep company with a man with whom they have little or no acquaintance. This is a serious indiscretion, to say the least. It leads to many unfortunate mixed marriages, and demands other and worse penalties. It often involves a Catholic girl in an affair with a married man, divorced or not divorced, and brings about a complete collapse of her virtue, faith, honor, reputation and happiness very quickly and forever.

Flirtations Easier to Start Than to Stop

For this reason no wise and good Catholic girl is ever induced to keep company with a man before she is thoroughly acquainted with his personal condition, the nature of his religious profession, and his reputation in the community. It is easy to start a flirtation incautiously, but not so easy to discontinue it honorably. And even if a girl's love for a non-Catholic man has in spite of herself grown ever so strong, it should never be beyond the control of her judgment and discretion, and of her regard for her ultimate happiness and wel-

fare. The stronger a factor in life love is known to be, the more the wise subject of it will be at pains to keep it within the bounds of wise and self-interested moderation.

Mr. and Miss Right

Let a girl be ever so madly in love with a non-Catholic, so much so that to her to separate from him or to live without him seems synonymous with death itself: if another acceptable young man, Catholic or non-Catholic, came along, of a much finer and more handsome appearance, in a far better type of automobile than the other has, of a better trade or profession, of a more substantial and reliable income, and made honorable, fond and eager advances to her: she would ordinarily soon weaken in her great love, and begin to see that her one and only lover is not so unique and exceptional after all, but rather capable of material improvement. This at least shows the folly of the contention, that for every girl there is but one man, the right one, and no other; and that for every man there is but one truly lovable woman. After marriage this is true, but, alas, not always observed. Before marriage, however, it is good to keep an open mind and a free heart until the right one, according to God, and with a view to solid happiness and salvation, is available.

She Can Not Live Without Him

As to not being able to live without a certain non-Catholic man after a girl has fallen in love with him, this is a mere delusion of youthful and fervent nature, whose one purpose is to lure candidates into marriage quite regardless of the consequences. And in a mixed marriage many a Catholic woman soon finds it much harder to live with her non-Catholic husband than she ever imagined it could be to live without him. God has His own way of punishing those who make light of His graces, notably the grace of faith. Separation, decidedly resolved upon and firmly maintained, will cure the heart of any love affair that is known to be dangerous or ill-advised. And the goods at stake fully warrant this violent separation of a Catholic girl from a non-Catholic lover, even if they should be already engaged. To break an engagement for a sound reason—and here is one, if ever there is any—hard and disagreeable as it may be for the moment, is infinitely preferable to entering upon a marriage that has every mark of becoming miserable and which may easily and rapidly end in divorce. Rather separate amicably before marriage, than inimically after marriage. Rather shed tears of loving regret and leave-taking now, than tears of hateful remorse and estrangement in the divorce court later on.

One-Man Girls

And as far as not being capable of ever loving anyone else is concerned, this is another mere delusion of nature, assisted by self-love and blindness to one's best interests. These ardent and vehement one-man natures are usually the ones which, after matriage, have the greatest difficulty in remaining concentrated on the object of their choice. They then feel convinced there are so many others they might have loved and whom they could now love without any effort.

There is not so much difference in men, that for one girl there is but one man in all the world to whom she can feel attracted. You may read this in novels, but it is not borne out by the facts of real life. After all it is the sex appeal mostly that attracts man to woman and woman to man, when there is question of marriage. And no one man, to use a common phrase, has the monopoly of sex appeal for any one woman. If she but gives herself a chance to become properly acquainted with other men, she will likely soon find one whom she can love as much or even more than the one whose love she sacrificed for the salvation of her immortal soul.

Give the Catholic Boys a Chance

Whenever Catholic girls complain, that somehow they do not meet desirable Catholic

fellows, or are never asked to accompany them anywhere, the reason often is, that because of their non-Catholic company they do not give the Catholic boys a proper chance. These boys understand that the girls already have their friends and escorts, and consequently they make no advances to them. A number of our Catholic girls fritter away their best years, and the period of their greatest personal attractiveness and charm, in the unpromising company of non-Catholic young men, and thereby through their own fault lose the occasion of making a good Catholic match.

The flippant assertion that there are no desirable Catholic young men on the matrimonial market is absurd. Every week, in the open season, you read of nice Catholic girls marrying fine Catholic young men; so there must be enough of them available. Nor does it bespeak a fair mind and a noble heart in a Catholic girl when she says, that the Catholic young men are not the gentlemen non-Catholic young men are, and do not treat the girl they take out with the same dignity and respect. By and large our Catholic young men are at least just as decent and honorable as are the non-Catholic; ordinarily much more so. It may be that a certain girl has been unfortunate in the types she has met; and even in this sup-

position she may have been as guilty of whatever occurred as were her escorts.

A St. Agnes in Love-Making

This assertion is usually the merest subterfuge used by a girl who desperately looks for some excuse to keep on hurrying towards a mixed marriage which will probably be her undoing temporally and eternally. And in her whirlwind courtship with her non-Catholic friend she will not likely be altogether angelic. A girl who lightly exposes her faith to danger is usually not a St. Agnes in love-making. This is no judgment on any individual case; it is only a general statement that is not easily disproven. In courtship, too, a girl is commonly known by the company she chooses; and the calibre and manner of her gentlemen friends are ordinarily in keeping with her own manner. Even for this reason alone a Catholic girl should not be too prone and too loud in denouncing all Catholic young men as scoundrels and profligates, for she will be only betraying her own weakness, not to say anything of the reflection she is casting on her own brothers.

There Is a Difference

It is, alas, but too true, that at times some Catholic marriages develop much more disastrously than certain mixed marriages. But

to use this as a pretext to contract a mixed marriage with confidence is sheer evasion and self-deception. It is an obvious sophism and smacks of insincerity with oneself as well as with others. While some Catholic marriages are unhappy, the proportion of the unfortunate to the fortunate ones is not nearly nine to one as it is in mixed marriages. And the unhappiness does not as a rule take the shape of the loss or diminution of the holy faith in the parents and children as it likes to do in unhappy mixed marriages. Furthermore this unhappiness can not be so distinctly foreseen and reasonably feared, as in mixed marriages: hence the victims are ordinarily more to be pitied than blamed, save in some exceptional cases, where common sense dissuades as much from a certain Catholic marriage as from a mixed marriage. But whoever contracts a mixed marriage always exposes herself to a serious danger consciously and deliberately, if not defiantly, and consequently deserves no pity, whatever turn her marriage may take.

The Real Motive

Many a mixed marriage is due to the fact, that a number of our Catholic girls prefer rich, socially prominent and professionally distinguished non-Catholic men, who have fine cars and take their girl friends to fashionable

places of dining and dancing and to so-called high-class shows, to poor, but respectable, hard-working and thrifty Catholic young men, who can not yet afford an automobile for pleasure, nor make much display of high-flown and elaborate entertainment.

I am not the one to deny, that to renounce the former for the latter at times involves a great and almost superhuman sacrifice for a Catholic girl. But the grace of God will render her equal to it, and the love of Jesus and her holy faith should be strong enough to actuate her to make it readily and cheerfully. She will never rue the virtuous making of it, but she may and likely will bitterly rue her refusal to make it.

The Two Crowns

One day our Lord appeared to St. Catherine of Siena in a vision. In one hand He had a crown of gold, in the other a crown of thorns. He said to her lovingly: "Catherine, My spouse, take your choice. You can have either crown, just as you like. If you want pleasure, comfort and self-indulgence, take the crown of gold: if you prefer sufferings, hardships and self-renunciation for My sake, pick the crown of thorns." Without hesitating a moment, Catherine chose the crown of thorns, kissing it and pressing it to her heart, saying: "O Jesus, my divine Spouse, Thou didst bear for the love

of me, unto Thy very death, the crown of thorns, which sank deep into Thy head. Why, then, should not I, for love of Thee, also wear the crown of thorns, fondly and devotedly, to the end of my life?"

Jesus seems to offer the same alternative to the Catholic girl in the aforesaid predicament. If she loves her Savior, and wants to make sure of remaining attached to Him to the end, and of sharing in His eternal glory, she will also say without hesitation and equivocation: "Begone, thou crown of gold, thou cold symbol of shallow, delusive and treacherous worldly pleasures, honors and distinctions! And come to me, thou crown of thorns, thou precious emblem of Jesus' love for me, and of my love for Jesus. In preference to dangerous riches and social preferments with a non-Catholic husband, give me the life of virtuous poverty, toil and lowliness in company with a husband who loves the same Jesus that I love, and professes and practices the same holy faith as I." "Know ye, that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded" (Ecclus., 2, 11). "It is good to trust in the Lord, rather than to trust in princes" (Ps. 117, 9).

Everyone Is the Arbiter of His or Her Fate

After all, as was said above, everyone is the arbiter of his or her own fate. The Catholic

girl that insists on marrying a non-Catholic is, as far as her free will goes, at liberty to marry him with or without the sanction of the Church: but for the consequences of her step she will be held responsible. In the meantime parents, pastors, confessors and missionaries have the sacred duty to warn her and others similarly disposed in season and out of season, as long as there is any hope of restraining them from the dangerous step. More than this they can not do. But so much they must do, no matter who takes it amiss or misconstrues and rails against their attitude.

But what of a girl who really has no chance to marry a Catholic, and who has arrived at the age when she must be glad to even get a non-Catholic husband? If she feels called to the married state, and there is no other partner available but a non-Catholic, what else can she do but marry him? Even in this case, with all the experience of my ministry before me, I should advise the Catholic maiden rather to stay single, than to venture into a mixed marriage. She would thus have, if not greater prospects of happiness, at least less threats of unhappiness. Single life, when virtuously and sensibly pursued, is after all not so hard and distasteful to a Catholic maiden, that she would be warranted to thrust herself into the dangers of a mixed marriage in order to escape

the troubles of single life. If she has suffered it for thirty or forty years without dying of loneliness, why can she not go through with it a few additional years for the love of God, of virtue, and her peace of mind?

St. Monica

The great historic patroness of unfortunate Catholic women married to non-Catholic men, and tasting all the bitterness and heartaches of a mixed marriage, is St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine. Consoling and heartening as is her experience for all those who have taken the fatal step, so much of a caution and warning is it for all those who are tempted so take it. After a marriage of countless woes she finally, shortly before his death, succeeded by her incessant prayers to obtain the conversion of her pagan husband, and shortly before her own death the conversion of her son, on whose early education the father's attitude did not have a wholesome influence. If anything, St. Monica's experience tells every Catholic girl, dallying with the danger of a mixed marriage: "Beware!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Mixed Marriages

PART FOUR.

> "*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church—that it should be holy and without blemish*" (*Eph.*, 5, 25, 27).

ONCE I recollect having relaxed somewhat from my usual inexorable attitude regarding mixed marriages. A maiden lady came to tell me, that she was much worried about her brother, who was keeping company with a non-Catholic girl, who was a fine girl, she said, but was not of the faith. I had the impression she was speaking of a young couple. When I asked her how old her brother was, she answered that he was sixty-two. I inquired about the age of the girl, and was told she was fifty-six. I then said that it would be far better, if both were Catholic; but under the circumstances, the prospective marriage did not seem to contain much of an element of danger to the Catholic party. Yet even in this case my

advise to the Catholic man would have been a positive: Don't. Rather remain single than marry a non-Catholic.

And now, having mentioned a Catholic man as a partner to a mixed marriage, I want to say that, perilous and baneful as it usually is for a Catholic girl to marry a non-Catholic, it is, as a rule, immensely more so for a Catholic young man to take a non-Catholic girl for his wife. The reasons lie on the surface. Man is more in need of woman as a helpmate than woman is of man. God did not say of woman what he said of man, namely, that it was not good for him to be alone. In marriage man needs the help of his wife mainly for the maintenance and practice of the true religion. Woman is by nature more pious and religious than man. He needs all the help she can give him in this phase of life.

She Wants What She Wants

If, then, instead of getting for his wife a woman who will assist, animate, stimulate and inspire him in the exercise of his holy faith, a young man acquires one who does not believe in his faith at all, what help will she be to him in the main item of life? Far from being a help, she will likely prove a distinct hindrance, and soon offer him not only passive but even active resistance. Here is a case where the

unhappy Catholic husband frequently observes to his bitter chagrin, that a woman can be terribly stubborn, and that as to religion particularly she wants what she wants, and does not want what she does not want. Especially will he be apt to experience this with regard to Catholic morality referring to sinful family restriction, to the Catholic education of the children, to the support of the Church and other such items of transcending importance in the eyes of a good Catholic, but often of no concern whatever, or even of aversion and positive dislike to his non-Catholic spouse. And how can the picture of the union of Christ and the Church be duplicated in such a marriage?

His Own Fault

Whatever misery, woe and pain betide a Catholic young man in a mixed marriage, he deserves no sympathy whatever, much less even than the Catholic girl who marries into a disastrous mixed marriage, for he voluntarily and altogether unnecessarily has brought all of them on of his own volition. In our country and in our times there never is the shadow of an excuse for a Catholic young man to marry one not of the Church. Every decent and honorable Catholic man—and if he is not decent and honorable he should not marry at all—can

procure a fine and splendid Catholic girl for his wife, if he takes the necessary steps to obtain her.

In all the elements a noble man seeks in a mate: virtue, beauty, refinement, goodness, loveliness, sweetness, grace, ability and cleverness, our American Catholic girls are known not to have any superiors anywhere. The only thing a non-Catholic girl may surpass them in is money: but what is the value of the money of the one, when contrasted with the value of the true faith of the other? And the Catholic young man who is more lured by money than by religion in choosing his prospective wife is not deserving of the grace of faith, and by his very choice he seems to be quite insensible to the possible loss of it. As a rule such a one soon joins the large and unfortunate army of the apostates. The first apostate fell through greed, too. It is hard to imitate him in his greed either for money or what money stands for in the world: prestige, social position, commercial success, political eminence, travel and worldly enjoyments: without following him in his defection from Christ and His Church. God will not be mocked.

In the Beginning

It is worthy of notice that, when the Bible mentions instances of mixed marriages as ter-

rible sources of religious havoc on a large scale, it invariably refers to marriages contracted by believing men with unbelieving women. They are invariably more precarious and ill-boding than marriages of believing women with unbelieving men, although these, too, are dangerous enough. In the very beginning of the human race mixed marriages brought perdition on a large scale to mankind. The sad history of the effect of the first mixed marriages is thus told by the inspired writer in the very first book of the Bible: "The sons of God seeing the daughters of men, that they were fair, took to themselves wives of all which they chose. And God said: My spirit shall not remain in man forever, because he is flesh. . . . And God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented Him that He made man on the earth. And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth" (Gen., 6, 2 sqq.). Human nature has not changed since then, and mixed marriages and their dire results keep on provoking the anger of God in a way as to induce Him ever and anon to take away His spirit of faith from those who prove unworthy of it.

Esau's Downfall

Later on we are told how Esau, disregarding his father's injunction not to take as his wife one of the daughters of Chanaan, got farther and farther away from God, he and his progeny, and they remained outside of the pale of God's chosen people from generation to generation.

When he sold his birthright and, with it, his father's blessing and the distinction of becoming one of the forefathers of the Messiah, he gave a manifestation of levity which is markedly characteristic of the Catholic young men, who for futile reasons of the flesh or of the world practically, in most instances, renounce their precious birthright of the Catholic faith together with its blessings not only for themselves but also for their children.

We are furthermore taught by the Bible that, no matter how strong in virtue, and pious of disposition, and religious of character a young man may have been, he no sooner entered matrimony with a woman not of his faith, when his strength departed and his virtue disappeared. Dalila, the Philistine wife of the great Samson, soon proved his undoing and reduced him, who had previously been the fear and terror of the enemies of God, to a sad clown and contemptible buffoon, who had to entertain them at their feasts, after he had become a byword of ridicule and reproach in their mouths.

A Wise Man Becomes a Fool

Solomon, one of the wisest men who ever lived, and one of the sweetest singers and prophets of the Lord, for allowing himself to fall in love with pagan women and taking them as his wives, was not long in forsaking the worship of the one true God and offering incense to base and abominable idols. Woman has a marvelous and mysterious power over man, for evil as well as for good. If he is consistently wise, therefore, and has an eye to his own substantial weal, he will be careful to surrender himself only into the power of such a woman as will exert the best possible influence over him, particularly in the most momentous department of life, in the practice of the one true and saving faith.

Since Solomon's case rather graphically portrays the fatal course of many a Catholic young man in our day, who recklessly or even wantonly contracts a mixed marriage, it may be pertinent to cite his sad story at length. Of this remarkable man, who at one time stood so high in God's estimation and enjoyed His most signal favors, the Bible, to which he was a contributor, by the way, describes the last living years in this sorrowful strain: "And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God,

as was the heart of David his father. But Solomon worshipped Astarthe the goddess of the Sidonians, and Moloch the idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did that which was not pleasing before the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as David his father. Then Solomon built a temple for Chamos, the idol of Moab, on the hill that is over against Jerusalem, and for Moloch, the idol of the children of Ammon. And he did in this manner for all his wives that were strangers, who burnt incense, and offered sacrifice to their gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his mind was turned away from the Lord the God of Israel, Who had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not follow strange gods: but he kept not the things which the Lord commanded him" (3 Kings, 11, 4 sqq.).

At the beginning, when Solomon fell in love with the heathen women, he had no mind to forsake his faith and his God. But it was not long and the love for these women thrust him in the grossest and crassest idolatry. His heart could not withstand their pernicious charm, once he gave himself into their power. But his ill-fated love for them did not excuse his subsequent conduct before the Lord, Who said to Solomon: "Because thou hast done this, and hast not kept my covenant and my

precepts, which I have commanded thee, I will divide and rend thy kingdom, and will give it to thy servant" (ib., 11).

The Worst of All

The worst king Israel ever had was Achab. Of himself he does not seem to have been so bad; but he married a pagan woman who instigated him to all sorts of iniquities. The Bible says of him: "Now there was not such another as Achab, who was sold to do evil in the sight of the Lord: *for his wife Jezabel set him on.* And he became abominable, insomuch that he followed the idols which the Amorrhites had made" (3 Kings, 21, 25, 26). The anger of God at both is recorded in these words: "And of Jezabel also the Lord spoke, saying: The dogs shall eat Jezabel in the field of Jezrahel. If Achab die in the city, the dogs shall eat him: but if he die in the field, the birds of the air shall eat him" (ib., 23, 24). These stories and declarations of the inspired book should set every young man, who is leaning towards a mixed marriage, a-thinking and a-pondering, whether it is after all not wiser in a matter of this kind to be counselled and directed right by the Lord than to be led astray by the promptings of the flesh, the world and the devil.

Non-Catholic Girls Are Often Splendid Persons

Must I again add the caution here, that we Catholics by no means hold non-Catholic girls who marry our young men to be of the type of Jezabel: intriguing, vicious and corrupt? In their way these non-Catholic girls are often splendid and exemplary persons. But not having the true faith, they can not, with the best of will, make ideal mates for Catholic men, and ideal mothers for Catholic children. And the best characters among them are known at times to be victims of strong prejudices against the Catholic faith, which come to the surface rather after than before marriage, and whipped by these prejudices, that are often fanned and intensified by meddling relatives, these good women frequently take an attitude to the religion of their Catholic husbands that is not at all calculated to make these husbands and their children be proud and fond of their holy faith, or to promote much joy and peace of any kind in the family. God knows the heart of woman and of man, if anyone knows it: and His versions of marriages of believing husbands with unbelieving wives is adequately contained in the excerpts of His official book adduced above.

Devilish Rejoicing

After reading the foregoing discussion, are any of my readers still wondering why priests and missionaries get so wrothy over mixed marriages? I do not pretend to speak for others, but I may be excused if I now tell why I, as a missionary, in my mission sermons, easily and readily get agitated when inveighing against mixed marriages. The main reason, as far as I can see, is this: I hardly ever get to a parish of any size but I see or hear of fine Catholic young people whose life was practically wrecked, and others, whose faith was totally extinguished by a mixed marriage. Some of these unfortunate men and women are grass widows or widowers, the objects of scorn and ridicule to their onetime conjugal companions, who have married again, and who seem to gloat over their former partner's loneliness and forsakenness with something akin to devilish rejoicing.

A Loveless and Joyless Life

Others are still living with their non-Catholic mates, but oh, their domestic life is unspeakably wretched and woeful, and they would give anything in the world if they could separate legitimately and with honor; but for the sake of convention and, more, for the sake of the children, they do violence unto themselves

and bear their lot to the end, crushed in spirit and broken at heart. For them life does not and never will contain another genuine joy.

And in everyone of these cases, before the marriage was finally contracted, the young people had been duly warned. But in their youthful levity they gave the warning no heed, convinced as they were, that theirs was an altogether singular case, on which general statistics had no bearing whatsoever, and which had to be judged by its own individual merits, that were of a most flattering and promising nature: yet they were hardly married a year or two, and the vaunted marriage went on the rocks to be pitilessly and hopelessly wrecked.

Save, Oh, Save!

Seeing or hearing all this practically in every parish of any size to which I am called to preach a mission, must not my heart bleed for these ruined existences and blasted prospects and, too, must not my soul go out with all its sympathy to the many other Catholic young men and women, who are preparing to take the same fatal step with—there is every reason to fear—the same disastrous consequences? And should I not be recreant to my sacred duty, if I did not caution them, with all the strength that was in me, against jeopardizing their best interests of this life and the next?

I am not interested in their wedding as such. But as a Catholic priest and missionary I am keenly interested in the spiritual and temporal welfare of those under my charge and, if they should light-heartedly or inadvisedly invite a catastrophe into their lives, I feel it to be a sacred duty to halt them, if possible, on the road to danger, and to return them again to the highroad of secure Catholicism and sound common sense. If they still insist on going the way of peril, I feel I have done what I could to save them and, though my heart feels heavy at the thought of what may be in store for them, I know the Lord will not hold me responsible for whatever ruin they may be plunged into. Every Catholic priest and missionary is actuated in his hostile attitude against mixed marriages by the same sentiments.

I will not deny that almost everywhere I also find one or the other instance of a so-called fortunate and happy mixed marriage. I always consider the parties of it favored, indeed, and highly privileged by God; for their case, as has been said more than once, stands out as one to nine. Where one such marriage is happy, nine are unhappy. And to date, barring those cases in which the non-Catholic partner has embraced the faith and duly lives up to it, I still have to find the good Catholic

man or woman, who is well married to a non-Catholic, as they say, who is yet really and thoroughly happy. The more they agree on all other matters, the more painful is their lack of agreement on the most important subject of life: religion.

When you investigate and press them, they will all admit, that there is but one thing missing to their happiness, and that is, that their mate is not a Catholic. They have been praying for his or her conversion from the beginning of their acquaintance, and they will not be really happy until the favor is granted them. In the meanwhile they are praying, hoping and sighing with more or less patience and resignation. They could have saved themselves this great trial by marrying one of the faith. They feel their plight more when they see the companions and chums of their childhood and youth happily married to Catholic partners: always going to church together, approaching the holy rail side by side at least once a month, and mingling and exchanging their great joy at all the glad religious occurrences in the family, such as the baptism and the first Holy Communion of the children. It cuts them to the heart to think: Why can not we, too, be so happy? Yes, why? Because you followed your own way in preference to the Church's way in marriage.

A Fly in the Ointment

Yes, even those Catholics, whose mates convert after marriage, at times find a fly in the ointment. Alongside of some excellent and very devout and exemplary converts through marriage, there are those whose conversion is superficial, and plainly more a matter of policy than conviction. This is evident from their entire manner of practicing their newly acquired faith. They do not live into it, can not grow enthusiastic about it, and often betray a sort of wonder why they ever embraced it at all. In addition they assume a patronizing attitude in the matter, as though they had conferred a great favor upon the Catholic mate for which they deserved everlasting gratitude and recognition.

This applies, too, in many cases, to pretended conversions before marriage. These conversions are often due only to the desire of contracting the marriage, and they would never be as much as thought of apart from it. Hence, not being the fruit of sincere conviction, the products of the conversion are usually far below par. There are exceptions, I confess, but they merely confirm the rule. While some of these matrimonial converts become veritable saints—we all know of certain such instances—the majority of them are no credit to the religion they espouse merely to obtain a

certain partner in matrimony. If this is so, why not state it plainly and baldly for the instruction of our young people, whose life is still before them and whose happiness is yet in the making?

Freemasons

I have made no special mention of freemasons in this chapter, because they usually rank with non-Catholics as far as mixed marriages are concerned. The case may be somewhat more aggravated for the Catholic woman when her husband is a freemason, as the traditional animus of freemasonry, at least in foreign countries, is positively and virulently hostile to the Catholic faith. The individual American freemason may not be so affected, or he may be unconscious of it when he marries a Catholic girl, but certain developments of married life and other causes may give him a pronounced feeling against whatever is Catholic.

In California there was an exemplary Catholic girl, educated in a convent boarding school, and giving a good account of herself in every way. After leaving school she was employed as a stenographer by a man who had a thriving business. Gradually he conceived a strong love for the girl, who was very beautiful besides being highly virtuous, and he asked her to marry him. He was a non-Catholic, however,

and a freemason. The girl esteemed him much and reciprocated his love. She accepted his proposal of marriage.

A Terrible Blunder

She mentioned the matter to me after she was already engaged, and I told her as plainly as I could, that she was making a terrible blunder. She could not see it in this light, since she knew the man thoroughly, having worked as his stenographer and secretary for five years day in and day out. He impressed her as the very soul of honor, and as being unusually broadminded and trustworthy. This made no effect on me, as it was about the same story one hears from every girl who is much in love.

She went through with the marriage and, after a considerable period, she met me again to tell me how happy she was with her freemason husband, who developed into the ideal mate she was convinced he would be, and she did not fail to add for my instruction, that she was decidedly happier than several of her Catholic girl friends who married Catholics, but who were not getting on nearly so well as she was. I congratulated her on her good fortune, and reminded her of her great debt of gratitude towards God, Who shielded her so visibly in a situation which completely ruined so many other Catholic girls.

The Sad Awakening

After some years I suddenly received a letter from her in which she wrote in the following sad and doleful strain: "Father, you remember me telling you how happy I was in my marriage. Now, alas, I have to state, that I am no longer happy, and I shall never taste another hour of happiness as long as I live." She then went on to relate that finally, after seven years of married life, God blessed them with their first child, a fine boy. Her first thought was, of course, to have the boy baptized. To her great astonishment and keen disappointment, however, she noticed that her husband was entirely averse to and set against any priestly baptismal ceremony for the boy. In the face of his solemn and duly signed prenuptial promises he forbade it with finality, as much as threatening to leave her, if she attempted to have the boy baptized by the priest. What was she to do? She had the priest to baptize her son secretly, unbeknowns to the father. Since then another son has arrived, who has been baptized in the same manner.

The Violation of a Mother's Rights

All the while she fears, if her husband found out about the baptisms, he would abandon her at once, and their home would be disrupted forever. Imagine a Catholic woman and

mother living in this state of mind. He is prospering in business and has provided her with a nice home and gives her plenty of money. "But what is money to me," she says, "if my sacred rights as a mother are rudely denied me?"

Her sons are now of school age, but she may not send them to a Catholic school for fear of incurring the father's displeasure and wrath, and of having her home broken up entirely. She is hurt in her innermost soul, and her keenest feminine and motherly sensibilities are cruelly violated. In a word, she is fiercely unhappy and, in keeping with her pitiful prediction, she will likely not taste another moment of real happiness as long as she lives. She is and will be a long time in paying the penalty for her girlish levity and cocksureness against better advice and in the face of the warning finger of her holy mother the Church.

Null and Void

It may be worth mentioning in this connection that, if a Catholic is married before a civil magistrate or a Protestant minister, the marriage is null and void. As little as they can confer the sacraments of penance or extreme unction, for instance, so little can those personages by their presence ratify the reception of the sacrament of matrimony on the part

of a Catholic. In fact, the Catholic who attempts marriage before a Protestant minister, not only is not married, but also sins grievously against the holy faith, in consequence of his or her recognition of non-Catholic worship. And the Catholic who is best man or, respectively, bridesmaid, at a wedding, the ceremony of which is performed by a Protestant minister, commits a mortal sin against the faith for the same reason. To be the official witness to a pretended wedding of a Catholic before a civil magistrate is also not allowed, because of the endorsement it gives of the sin committed by the party in question.

God Helps Them Who Help Themselves

I have been more diffuse in expatiating on mixed marriages than I had calculated. I hope the readers have borne with me. It was only my hope of doing them, or others through them, some good that carried me away to say all I have said. And if through the careful perusal of these pages a single person will be saved from the misery of a mixed marriage, I shall feel most amply and intensely rewarded. As a final word I want to say to all of my young readers tempted to, but also justly shying from, a mixed marriage: "Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found: call upon Him, while He is near" (Isai., 55, 6). God helps them who help themselves.

Bent as they may be on contracting a mixed marriage with one whom they love with all the ardor of their being, and close as they may be to the final step: now that the grace of God still cautions them, and Jesus speaks to them, calling them by name, as He spoke to St. Paul at the gates of Damascus, saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest [forsakest] thou Me?" (Acts, 9, 4) they should answer with St. Paul: "Lord, what will Thou have me to do?" Prayers, novenas, holy Masses and Communions are all helpful and profitable. But the real fruit and profit in this as in other problems of salvation result from the resolute and final decision of the will, in answer to God's grace. Invited and strengthened by it, say with your whole heart: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Whatever it is, and whatever it may cost, with Thy help I will do it: at once and forever." Godspeed to you!

Usually the best and safest way for a Catholic to solve the problem of an impending mixed marriage is to solve it as Alexander the Great solved the hopelessly involved Gordian Knot; namely by a decisive and final stroke of the will, which says peremptorily, and without ceremony or delay: "I am done with it. As far as I am concerned, it is off for good. I want to keep my soul in peace, and save it in the end."

CHAPTER XVIII.

More About Courtship

"A woman . . . is at liberty: let her marry to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 *Cor.*, 7, 39).

AN old saying has it, that if you are about to travel overseas, you should say one prayer; if you are going to war, you ought to say two prayers; and if you are going to get married, you must say three prayers. And from ancient times the Arabs have had the saying among them that when a young man is about to be married and everything is in readiness: the bride is decked out as a queen, ready to become his forever; the festive banquet is sumptuously prepared; all the guests have put in their appearance: if he has good sense, the young bridegroom-to-be will then, before the ceremony, take the best and swiftest horse at his command, and have it carry him as fast and as far away as possible. And even in our country today many say that the wisest, best, and most secure advice you can give a swain

who contemplates entering into marriage is: Don't!

People Go On Getting Married

Yet, notwithstanding all the cynical and discouraging remarks about marriage, people will go on getting married. Somehow they feel that normally the chances are decidedly in their favor. And this they are. By far the greater number of marriages among Catholics are happy and fortunate marriages, as far as happiness and good fortune are attainable in any vocation in this life. While we hear much of ill-fated marriages among Catholics, too, we must always remember, that they who are happily married do not advertise it, as a rule; whereas the ill-mated usually let the world know of it in a rather exaggerated degree. One wretched marriage makes more noise and creates more sensation than a hundred peaceful and happy marriages.

Moreover, while there is an element of danger involved in going to sea, to war or into matrimony, there is a possibility and prospect of gain commensurate to the danger that is undergone. Many a one achieved great wealth by crossing the sea; many another obtained high glory by engaging in war; and very many have procured love and bliss by taking a chance at matrimony. Of the three: money, glory and

love: love is the grandest prize; no wonder its acquisition requires the most prayers of the three. And the Arab who uses the fastest horse to get away from marriage to his lady love, may be running away from the greatest treasure and sweetest fortune life has in store for him.

Whom Will You Marry?

In the preceding chapters I mentioned certain types as undesirable matrimonial mates for Catholics. But merely to say whom you should not marry, is of little help, unless it is accompanied by an instruction as to whom to marry. To render my advice concrete on this consequential subject, I shall say that our Catholic young men and women will do best, if in this important item of their lives they take our Blessed Mother Mary and St. Joseph, respectively, as their models.

These two holy persons, first of all, looked upon marriage, even though marriage was not a sacrament at that time, as a sacred and indissoluble contract. For that reason they were cautious in selecting a proper and worthy partner. They prayed earnestly to God for light and guidance. No doubt they took counsel, too, from their parents, sincerely, humbly and maturely. In their prospective partner they looked for the essential qualifica-

tions rather than for merely secondary and ornamental traits.

Desirable Traits

In other words, they were careful to choose a mate of their own faith, who worshiped their God, frequented their temple, observed their law, and nursed the same religious hopes as they. This consideration was paramount, exclusive and final with them. They chose one whom they had known for a long time, and with whose antecedents and family history they were thoroughly acquainted. The partner they chose, although at the time devoid of wealth and social or any other worldly eminence, was known to have a good character and solid virtue, to be of good health physically, and to be sober, industrious, thrifty, unselfish, sympathetic and loyal.

None of the young readers of this book, who are inclined to matrimony, will be as happy in their choice of a partner as were Mary and Joseph. Yet they will do well by imitating as closely as possible their example in choosing a mate. Here again God helps those who help themselves. Above all, it is wise to avoid too much haste on the one hand, and too much procrastination on the other. Perhaps the greater number of unfortunate Catholic marriages are reducible to the undue hurry in

which the partners were chosen and the marriages contracted. And since early youth is known to be inclined to be hasty and indeliberate, young people will show prudence by not being impetuous and precipitate in a matter of such importance.

The Best Periods for Marriage

It has already been mentioned, that the best periods for marriage, speaking generally, are for the man from twenty-three to twenty-six, and for the woman from twenty-one to twenty-four. Slight differences, one way or the other, will not affect the situation. Since long courtships are ordinarily not to be countenanced, and since the tastes and judgments of a boy or girl of sixteen are often not those of a man or woman of twenty-three, it is inadvisable to fall in love and definitely to decide upon a matrimonial partner too early in life. It is more the part of discretion to keep one's heart in possession for a while, and thereby to give reason and unbiased judgment a chance to look the situation over thoroughly and soberly before arriving at a decision. Too great a difference in their ages should keep a girl from marrying a man. May and December rarely get on together.

A Protestant minister, on a Sunday evening, was rehearsing his sermon, when a young couple

nervously and impatiently rang the door bell of the rectory and asked him to perform the marriage ceremony for them at once. They exhibited the necessary license, and seemed to be in a great hurry. He rejoined, that it was time for him to begin the evening service in church, since the congregation was waiting for him; adding, however, that he would be glad to perform the marriage ceremony after the service in church was over. They said they could not wait, since they were to depart on the train that very night at half-past ten.

When he heard the hour of the departure of the train, he assured them that they had plenty of time, since the church service would be over at nine o'clock. "You come to church with me now," he said, "and after the service, before I dismiss the congregation, I will announce that, if there are any present who desire to be married, if they come forward, I shall be glad to perform the ceremony. Then you step forward, and thus you will have all the members of the parish as spectators of the glad event." This proposition rather appealed to the young people, especially to the girl, who was a charming bride, and they acceded to it cheerfully.

When the church service was over, the minister turned to the congregation, and kindly invited those who desired to be married to

step forward. The young man and fourteen girls marched up the aisle. It was a bit embarrassing, to say the least.

Girls, Be Careful!

Maybe girls, because of the greater nervous excitement they seem to experience in the years of adolescence, are more inclined to be impetuous and hasty about getting married than young men are; and, of course, if the marriage is a failure, the young wives are the ones who usually suffer most in consequence. Girls will do well, therefore, by remembering that for the woman, particularly, marriage is a most serious, precarious and consequential enterprise; that often, for her, there is not a great interval between the nuptial ceremony and the obsequies; and that a good way to avoid having one's emotions ruthlessly shattered after marriage is to exercise a wise check on them before marriage.

Some time ago there came to my notice a very sad case. A fine Catholic young lady was engaged to be married to a splendid Catholic young man with considerable solemnity at Holy Mass. Everything was in readiness for the glad occasion when the girl, several days before the wedding, took sick and died. On the same day on which she was to be married, and at the same hour, her funeral service took place in

the church, and the girls who were to be her bridesmaids acted as her pall-bearers. It was touchingly and unutterably sad.

From Life to Death

Yet I could not help reflecting, that a number of the apparently happy wedding celebrations of our Catholic young girls, who are in too great a hurry to be married, are in a way much sadder and more pitiful in their consequences. The girl of the story died a good death, and was invited to the heavenly nuptials with the Lamb of God: whereas the brides of hasty marriages frequently, on their wedding day, begin a slow death of all their life's ambitions, hopes, joys and dreams. The aforesaid girl went from death to life: they go from life to death. She was apparently dead, but in reality alive: they are apparently living, but in reality dead.

It is wise, then, to be deliberate, calm and careful. Parents are usually, because of their God-given office, their experience, and their love for their children, the best advisers of their children towards a happy marriage. Children, then, have much in their favor, as a rule, when they follow their parents' advice in choosing a mate. Statistics prove, they say, that in countries, in which parents do all the choosing of the matrimonial mates for the children,

marriages are proportionately happier than where children do the choosing for themselves. One reason for this may be, that there love begins after marriage, whereas here it not infrequently ends at marriage. Be this as it may, parents are, by and large, the most reliable counsellors children have in the way of getting married as well as otherwise.

The Parents' Interest

In addition to this, whilst parents may not and should not try to force or unduly influence their children to marry or not to marry this or that certain person: for the parents' taste is not always the children's taste; and yet the children are the ones who have to endure the marriage, however it may develop: still the parents have a certain personal interest in the marriage of their children; and this interest children should not coldly disregard and ignore. The parents will have a certain association with the child-in-law and its family and, all things being equal, if this association can be made delightful for the parents, why should the children not aim to make it so by being properly guided in the choice of a marriage partner? In being so guided the children will usually consult their own interests and happiness as well.

Some Parents Are Unreliable Guides

It must be owned, however, that not all Catholic parents are ideal guides and counsellors to their children. Some there are who, usually through selfish motives, do not do the right thing by their children. Even as some parents, through jealousy, which prompts them to keep and exploit their children for themselves alone, restrain their children from entering the priesthood or the religious life, so there are those who, through the same egotistic reasons, keep their children from getting married. They are jealous of every person who comes into the children's life, and they do what they can to preclude every attraction or association that may lead to a marriage of their children. They are often quite mean and vile in the means they resort to in order to accomplish their egotistic purpose.

Mothers there are, too, who keep their marriageable daughters completely in ignorance regarding the nature, the origin and the development of life and designedly eschew every reference to the purposes, the aspirations and the rights of the girls' sexual life, merely so they do not conceive thoughts and leanings towards matrimony. Some mothers do this from a misconceived love for their daughters. Because their own married life proved burdensome and hard, they want to keep their girls from a

similar misfortune and hardship. Frequently they thereby inflict upon their children the far greater hardship of unsatisfied honorable sexual longings and an ungratified urge for conjugal association and companionship. That their own marriage was not a happy venture is no sign that the girls will not have better luck.

Besides, when women get old, they easily take a pessimistic view of marriage in general and their own in particular. They love to stress the troubles, and minimize the joys of it. Moreover, for being hard and burdensome, marriage is not for that reason alone undesirable: for what worth-while vocation is not at times and quite consistently hard and burdensome? Parents, too, who from selfish reasons dictate to their children whom they may, and whom they may not marry, are not rare even in America. Through their selfishness and tyranny they render themselves and their children miserable.

Make Haste Slowly

To be too hasty in choosing a partner for marriage, is unwise: to be dilatory and undecided, is hardly less so. Love at first sight is a dangerous thing to act on impulsively: but to be too calculating in gaging a candidate for one's hand, easily eliminates love altogether.

It will do the emotional, sentimental and impulsive characters a world of good if, when they love at first sight, they take a good, long, searching, deliberate and sensible second look. But to keep on looking and looking, before making a decision, has a tendency to render the most charming and desirable object commonplace, banal and unappealing. No length or degree of hesitation or deliberation will ever remove every element of risk from whatsoever marriage.

Where Is He?

For patent reasons girls can not afford to wait as long as men in choosing a marriage mate. The common saying has it, that in her late teens a girl romantically asks with reference to the man who offers marriage: "Who is he?" His personality is all she then considers. In the early twenties she already begins to ask? "What is he?" She wants to know something about his profession or trade. After she is twenty-six she merely asks: "Where is he?" She is willing to take whomsoever just so it's a man. But sometimes she even asks this question too late. He's gone, maybe forever. She missed the one good chance she had. It must be owned, that if this is the rule, it has many exceptions, particularly nowadays, when unwedded girls seldom admit they are,

and at any rate to themselves never appear to be, twenty-six years old or beyond.

Once a favorable decision as to the acceptability of a person as a possible or prospective marriage mate has been rendered, the proximate preparation for marriage begins. This preparation is called courtship. It gives the parties of it an occasion to become better acquainted with one another, and to enable them to make up their minds as to the ultimate acceptance of one another towards marriage.

The Qualities of Courtship

Courtship, or company-keeping in the conventional sense, must above all be sincere. It is permissible only when there is at least a possibility and a certain probability of a marriage between the partners to it. When every thought and likelihood of marriage is excluded, steady or regular company-keeping is directly or indirectly immoral and sinful.

Courtship must also be sincere in this sense, that the parties of it are mutually frank and candid in apprising one another of their true status regarding their health, religion, economical condition, freedom from encumbering obligations of a personal or financial nature, and other items of consequence. A person who would hide from the partner the fact of a serious secret illness, of a social nature, for

instance, or of an important disability refering to sexual life, or of heavy debts clamoring for payment, or of previous convictions in court on criminal charges involving considerable dishonor, or of a breach of promise of marriage to another, entailing possible arraignment in court or other very unpleasant after effects, would be unfair, dishonest and unjust. It might even happen that, owing to the concealment of a diriment impediment, the subsequent marriage would be invalid, and a serious injury to the innocent party. At any rate, lack of candor and honor before marriage is never rewarded by contentment and happiness after marriage. If in ordinary business contracts honesty is the best policy, no other method can prosper and succeed in the most sacred and momentous contract of life.

Too Confidential

This does not mean, however, that every personal and intimate revelation is mutually required or desirable on the part of lovers. For them, too, before and after marriage, there remains a hallowed domain of personal secrets, the revelation of which is made only to God and His personal representative. This refers to secret individual lapses and sins which are past and, presumably, through a good confession, forgiven and forgotten by God, and which

should consequently be forgotten by the perpetrators themselves, and never be individually recalled or referred to again. Girls are more prone than men to err in this regard. When they are in love, some girls grow too confidential and trusting and, to show their lover that they are hiding nothing whatever from him, they tell him of their more or less serious indiscretions with one or more other men. The result often is, that the man who is told this tale, for the communication of which there was no reason whatever, turns against the girl and seeks a plausible reason to discontinue calling on her. Or, if he marries her in spite of her imprudent confidences, because the courtship could no longer be broken off, the bliss of the ensuing marriage will likely be marred by the unwise revelation made him by his betrothed.

Some Women Are Stupid

Some women who are already married are stupid and foolish enough to manifest their sexual transgressions, committed before or after marriage, to their husbands, not realizing that by such uncalled for manifestation they jeopardize what marital love and well-being they possess. Sins of a personal nature, without damaging consequences to the other party, must be revealed only to God and His official delegate for purposes of forgiveness.

Needless to say, this advice is not aimed at the furtherance of, or connivance at, sexual or marital license, but only at the observance of wise caution, prudence and common sense. It is bad enough to have sinned: there's no need of multiplying unnecessarily the evil effects of sin through indiscreet and uncalled-for manifestations. Of course, if these sexual irregularities involved illegitimate parenthood, the existence of the child in question, or the serious forfeiture of one's reputation would ordinarily have to be made known to the partner of the courtship.

Are All Lovers Liars?

They say, that all lovers are liars. There may be exceptions, but in general this proverb is true. Or, perhaps, it were more correct to say, that the vows of love and professions of devotion customary among lovers have a certain conventional sense, which every reasonable person understands, and for that reason their strictly verbal and literal meaning must be intelligently discounted; hence they are commonly not lies, but metaphors, conventional phrases, or nice ways of saying things, and showing the other party a good time innocently and at little expense.

In view of this many lovers who say they never really loved before, or they are just now

conceiving the real sense of true love, or their love knows neither measure nor limit, or they feel they will never be able to love any other person on earth: in speaking thus, provided they actually love the person they are addressing, they are hardly to be classed among liars and knaves, or called disingenuous and disreputable, even though they have had previous love affairs, or are perhaps nursing one or the other alongside of the one they are mainly pursuing.

Is Love Insanity?

At all events, it behoves lovers to be wise to the language of love, and not to take it too literally and seriously. Even when it is meant in all its actual significance, as in theory it always ought to be, the users of it are usually, to employ a slang phrase, unconscious or semi-conscious; they are inebriated with love, and hardly speak as one who is sober, and properly apprehends, and prudently weighs all the meaning and drift of the words he utters. Love is a mild form of insanity, they say, and mildly insane people are not altogether responsible for what they say.

Does it bespeak dishonesty or lack of candor in courtship if a girl, for example, accepts the attentions of other men while she is keeping regular company with one or, even, if she keeps regular company with more than one man

simultaneously, without telling the men in question of the rival or rivals she is admitting and encouraging to her love? As long as she has made no formal engagement of marriage with anyone, she is free to consider and, in a way, to abet whatever honorable advances are made to her by others, in order to decide which one of the contenders for her hand is more acceptable in her eyes. The first or present applicant for her troth may or may not be the best one available. To learn this to her satisfaction, nothing hinders her from admitting and considering others with a view to her greater good.

To Have Loved But One

While there is a measure of satisfaction in having loved only one person in life: the partner of one's marriage; and, also, in being the only person one's partner has ever loved in life: still there is some gratification, too, in being satisfied, that of all persons one has loved the one finally chosen as the marriage mate is far and away the best and the most lovable, and has substantially and lastingly gained in value by having been compared to all competitors; and there is a similar gratification, relatively, to the one thus preferred. At the same time the girl of more than one suitor must be sincere with everyone of them, inasmuch as once she

knows, that a certain one has absolutely no prospect of being finally considered as a marriage mate, she no longer accepts his attentions. For to encourage him when she is in such a state of mind would be unladylike, insincere and unvirtuous.

After a girl is definitely and formally engaged to be married to a man, she is no longer honorable and ingenuous if she carries on furtive or open flirtations with others; for the very final engagement to one man excludes every consideration of another. Before engaging herself ultimately to one, she is free virtuously to encourage and endorse whom she pleases: but by engaging herself finally to one she declares, that he is her one and only love.

Engagement Is Not Marriage

Of course, no matter how formal and solemn it may be, an engagement is not a marriage. For good reasons it may be honorably rescinded. And one such reason would be if, after being engaged to a man, a girl would become conscious of having the chance to procure a much more desirable and valuable marriage partner than the one to whom she promised her troth.

Here it may be mentioned, that the only marriage engagement which has any official value in the eyes of the Church is a written

one that is duly signed by the parties and the required witness or witnesses. This manner of engagement is not frequent. It is superfluous to add, that all that was said above with reference to a girl in her relations to her lover or lovers applies equally to a young man similarly situated.

Off with One: On with Another

What appraisal is to be made of the conduct of young people, it may next be asked, who pursue several love affairs, not synchronously, but successively, who are, as the saying is, off with one and on with the other? If for good reasons they discontinue keeping company with one, there is no cause why they should not consider another aspirant for their hand in marriage. But thoughtlessly and frivolously to be in love and keep company, today with one and tomorrow with another, bespeaks neither character, nor good sense, nor virtue; nor does it make one appear desirable as a marriage mate to any worthwhile person; neither does it help one's good reputation in the community in general.

People will suspect that the person in question, if it is a young man, is looking more for an easy companion for what he calls a good time, but what is often merely a sinful amorous adventure, than for a virtuous and trust-

worthy wife; and if it is a girl, they will be inclined to look upon her as being an easy prize for triflers and philanderers, and not too intent upon the preservation of her maidenly dignity and purity. Years ago I heard a missionary say, perhaps more pointedly than delicately, of such a girl: "And what respectable young man will care to have for his wife such a piece of candy on the stick, at which every one has been licking?" She is the girl whom, when they want a wife, even the very trifling and lascivious among men forget. In love, too, a rolling stone gathers no moss; and usually they do best who stick to their bush. Constancy and fidelity in courtship are a good preparation for steadfastness and loyalty in marriage.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Proper Conduct in Courtship

PART ONE.

"For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things" (*Philipp.*, 4, 8).

EVERY important requisite of Christian courtship is the maintenance of its sanctity through the conscientious preservation of honor, purity and mutual esteem and reverence on the part of the lovers. They will find it less difficult to keep their courtship on a high and ideal plane, holy and pure, if they remember the sacredness of the sacrament for the reception of which courtship is the season of proximate preparation. Even as the candidate for the sacred priesthood grows more fervent in purifying and sanctifying his soul, the closer the time of his ordination advances, even so

the candidates for matrimony should strive more earnestly to keep and cleanse their souls from sin and evil habits, the nearer their marriage approaches.

Here again I want to remind the young lovers, that in the conduct of their courtship, too, they can choose and imitate no better and more inspiring models than Mary and Joseph. If your prospective marriage is decreed in heaven, as was that of Mary and Joseph, the best sign of this will be the pure and honorable manner in which you prepare yourselves personally and mutually for it in the period of courtship.

Watch the Beginning

In this highly delicate and momentous feature of courtship much depends upon a good beginning. If the parties start their company-keeping with the firm resolution to conduct it after God's pleasure to the exclusion of everything that is not strictly in keeping with the sacred demands of Catholic modesty, chastity and reserve, the progress of it will easily be kept within the bounds of duty and integrity. As long as the first lapse is definitely avoided, further transgressions need not be feared. But once a start is made or permitted on the lubricous road of amorous lapses in courtship, it easily becomes the insidious leak that sinks the

ship of true love, and the ugly puncture that demolishes, perhaps forever, a beautiful romance and a splendid prospect of supreme earthly happiness.

The Three Enemies

The world is seductive, the flesh is luring, and the devil is tempting: all these three enemies of the soul conspire, particularly in courtship, to make certain intimacies and liberties of a sensuous and passionate nature appear to be, not only not sinful, repulsive and abhorrent as they really are, but rather justifiable, desirable and appropriate to the young couple, because of their relations as lovers or prospective consorts in marriage. The more the courtship proceeds to the satisfaction of the parties, and the more ardent their mutual love and devotion grow, the more nature inclines them to override the voice of conscience in the interest of their sentimental and amorous cravings for one another, and to take the broad and liberal view of passionate endearments referred to above.

It requires much virtue, character and circumspection to withstand this temptation unfailingly and consistently; but with the help of prayer and the frequent worthy reception of the sacraments many Catholic couples do not find it very difficult, let alone impossible.

Once lovers yield to the aforesaid liberal, fleshly, worldly and satanic view of the lecherous practices in courtship, they will plunge headlong into the vortex of criminal passion, and the end of their disastrous conduct can not be foreseen. The gruesome stories, however, of broken courtships, of illegitimate births, of criminal abortions, of incurable hatreds and feuds between onetime lovers, and between their respective families, are some indication of the woefully swift and fatal course of unholy love.

The Ideal Christian Standard

The thought of this possibility in their own instance, in case they weaken, and, on the other hand, the thought of so many splendid Catholic young couples, situated like themselves, keeping their courtship hallowed, innocent and sublime in the face of the same natural propensities, weaknesses and passions by which they themselves are assailed, ought to be a sufficient stimulus for sensible and conscientious lovers to maintain the ideal Christian standard in their company-keeping, and to be the better and happier for it in every way, in the present as well as in the future.

Some time ago, speaking on courtship, a prominent citizen, at a public banquet of the Rotary Club, said: "When a young man and

a young lady have been keeping company for a while, they are no longer the same they were before. They are either better or worse. And it will depend upon the girl, whether they will be rather the one than the other." He attributed the credit to the girl, if they were better; but he also attached the responsibility to the girl, if they were worse; in other words, if the courtship degenerated into a practice of mutual sin in the guise of unholy love, the girl was to blame. This seems one-sided and hardly fair. It would be more just to give both an equal share of credit and blame, respectively. Yet the general practice of mankind seems to judge and punish the girl more severely than the man, according to the adage: The woman always pays. What accounts for this?

The Feminine Instinct of Purity

Above all by nature woman has a stronger instinct of purity and modesty than man. Chastity is her characteristic excellence, glory and pride. Second, her remorse over the admission of anything against chastity in thought or word, especially in conduct, particularly with one of the opposite sex, is more keen, deep and crushing. Girls and women, who had been violated completely against their will, have been known to find life altogether unbearable in consequence, although they had

no fault whatever in the sad event. When conscience reproaches a woman that she is guilty of her own dishonor, the sting is more poignant and humiliating.

In the third place, for the preservation of her virtue nature endows woman with a strong instinct of self-protection against the passionate approach or aggressiveness of man, by making her naturally timid, shy, reserved, suspicious and fearful of danger. Fourth, the tendency of woman towards a complete revelation to others of her experiences in love are another method nature has of safeguarding her purity. A normal girl is strongly inclined to tell her mother everything her lover says and does to her. As long as she follows this tendency and candidly reveals everything to her mother, she is safe and secure. But once she becomes secretive and furtive and deceitful towards her mother or guardian with reference to her love affairs, she is either in danger of falling or has already fallen. And as regards a Catholic girl, what has been said of her candor and sincerity towards her mother, applies in a proportionate, and in even a more stringent manner to her attitude in the sacred tribunal of penance, whenever her conscience is uneasy regarding certain incidents of her courtship. An humble frankness in revealing her temptations, dangers

and weaknesses will be a powerful protection against and a timely deliverance from them.

The Single Standard

Anyway, because of the strong safeguards nature furnishes woman for the maintenance of her purity, the impression is prevalent, that she ought to be more concerned about its integrity than man. Yet the Church does not endorse this one-sided view, but upholds the single standard of morality for men and women, in marriage and outside of marriage. If nature safeguards woman as described above, she also steels man towards the preservation of his own and woman's chastity by a strong instinct of self-respect, nobility of character, genuine chivalry and high-minded gallantry.

To every decent Catholic young man who is reading these pages I feel I can hopefully repeat the words of St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved because of his purity (1 John, 2, 14): "I write unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." If in their company-keeping the young man follows his and the girl follows her noble natural instincts and, being Catholics, if they both use the means of grace and remove the occasions of sin as much as possible, there will be no danger of their courtship descending to a level

of which they have to be ashamed before themselves as well as before God, angels and men.

Holding Hands

Here the caution may already find place, that the sense of touch is usually the most seductive in regard to purity, and is therefore to be placed under a particular guard by lovers who are resolved, that their period of courtship, whatever may be its termination, will leave no remorse in its wake. As long as they carefully avoid touching, holding, handling, fondling and petting each other, there will be little danger of their being beguiled into carnal excesses: but once they allow their propensities of love the proverbial little finger in the way of various mutual touches, such as the sustained holding and pressing of hands and the like, they will gradually demand and obtain more and more, until the end is often and soon execrable shame and unquenchable regret.

It is quite possible for sincere and virtuous lovers to manifest the deepest, strongest and warmest mutual feeling for one another in ever so many nice, chaste and noble ways, without resorting to dangerous mutual touches, kisses, embraces and postures, such as reclining in one another's arms, or one sitting on the other's lap. It is seldom, if ever, that these and similar familiarities can be lingeringly indulged in with-

out serious sin. Whoever does not enjoy them, does not practice them. And who enjoys them evidently has a temperament that is not impervious to strong sexual passion, and consequently exposes him or her self to the proximate danger of sinning by practicing or permitting them.

And even if they felt altogether immune from fleshly temptations in the matter, they might be seriously, even though indirectly, tempting the other party to impure thoughts, desires and emotions, and thereby becoming accessory to another's sins.

True Love Has Three Elements

True love, they say, is made up of three things: respect, admiration and passion. Of the three the most important is respect. Once it is forfeited through mutual unbecoming familiarities, admiration goes a-glimmering, and there is nothing left but sensuous, filthy, disgraceful and disastrous passion, the sad and fatal end of a one-time sweet, entrancing and inspiring love.

While religious considerations always weigh heaviest with Catholic lovers towards keeping their courtship high, sacred, and sublime, they are well supported and strongly reinforced by prudential and common sense motives of no little value. Psychology teaches and experience proves, that the only way to keep a

courtship mutually and uniformly agreeable and satisfying, is to contain it within the bound of honor and virtue. The fact that the partners to it have nothing to hide, nothing to disguise, and nothing to be ashamed of, is of itself a strong factor of mutual pleasure and gratification. Once something low and illicit is permitted to enter into it, the happy tenor and safe mood of the lovers is disturbed and destroyed, and will never again return with the sweetness and naturalness of yore. Amorous irregularities and sensuous liberties, or petting and necking, as they are often euphemistically called, seem harmless and justifiable to incautious lovers, but their harm and destruction soon become evident even to them. They act upon them with the lethal effect of a dangerous drug. Even as the use of such a drug easily becomes a tyrannical habit, and renders normal food and stimulation ineffective and unattractive: so the indulgence in sexual improprieties between lovers soon becomes a vicious and tyrannous habit with them, clamoring morbidly for more and more satisfaction, regardless of their mutual humiliation and degradation.

Tennis and Golf

Before they had any thought of such infamous practices, they found pleasure in sweet and

honorable companionship: in taking a stroll; in playing a game of tennis or golf, or some other athletic exercise; in carrying on an interesting conversation; in music, dancing and card-playing. Everything was nice and dignified and respectable. While they enjoyed being alone at times for the reciprocal exchange of their professions of love and attachment, they were not averse to the company of others; in fact, they courted it as a rule; and they were never afraid of being caught unawares, for they had nothing to conceal.

But once they sin together, all is changed. The normal joys and pleasures of company-keeping, from which they used to derive so much happiness and sweet contentment, now appear stale, insipid and unsatisfying to them; they crave and enjoy only what is morbid in love, and what is prohibited by God, and tabooed by all self-respecting people. In consequence they become stealthy in their manner, impatient of the company of others, selfishly isolated, incommunicative, sullen and forbidding. Their very manner betrays their misconduct. The reaction of others is not in their favor. People begin to suspect and shun them, and to leave them alone to their shameful practices of unholy love. Much is said now a days of the high cost of living, but the tremendously high cost of sinful loving eternity only will reveal.

The Deceitful Quicksand

Quicksand looks soft and inviting to the feet. Yet whosoever follows its lure and ventures into it, with the determination to touch its surface merely without sinking, will soon find himself going hopelessly down into it farther and farther, until he is engulfed beyond redemption. Similarly it is the greatest folly for lovers to be decoyed into the first unhallowed indulgences of mutual love, with a firm resolution to go only so far and no farther: ere they are quite conscious of it, the quicksand of passion has drawn them irresistibly on and buried them in moral impotency. They made a mistake, as was said above, by taking the initial step into the realm of sinful love. Had they only avoided the first, there never would have been the second. Standing on the shore above Niagara Falls, away from the water, you are safe from perdition. One step into the current, however, will be the beginning of your end.

The Non-Catholic Soldier

Returning from Europe to the United States in the summer of 1919, I met a non-Catholic soldier on board the ship. He was a young man of New York City, about twenty-five years old. He admitted confidingly, that in his private life he had lapsed through the weakness

of the flesh. He told me that, when he was busy in the soldiers' camp in France, he had no trouble in keeping his mind clean and his heart pure. But when he sauntered out into the cities, and saw girls and women dressed in the ultra-modern fashions, there started within him evil suggestions and vicious desires which he could not or did not restrain. In the camps, he said, various agencies exhibited film pictures of the terrible ravages of social diseases. When he saw them, he was stricken with horror, and decided never to transgress again. But when in his roaming through the city temptation beset him, the remembrance of the pictures had no power whatever to keep his evil passions in check. They clamored for gratification, whatever the fatal consequences might be.

A Hundred Per Cent Drop

By way of information he added: "Father, when a young man arrives at a certain age, he conceives a strong inclination for the company of a girl. For his companion he selects a girl whom he considers pure and innocent. No other girl would appeal to him. After going with this girl for a time, he feels inclined to get close and become familiar with her. He will directly or indirectly make advances to her for liberties to which he is not entitled. In case the girl yields, she at once drops one hun-

dred per cent in his estimation, and she will never again recover the place she held in his esteem and love." I agreed with him in this, of course, and I could not help marvelling at the force and precision with which he gave expression to the psychological law of man's relation to woman.

Girls and Their Apparel

I hope the story just related will also impress the girls of their sacred responsibility as to modesty of dress. Whilst they may only be aiming at a vain display of beauty in wearing an excessively so-called modern and fashionable apparel, in the eyes of their lover or other masculine beholders the dress may be strongly suggestive of and tempting to indecency. A good and pure girl will rather forego the empty pleasure of being admired for her dress than run a risk of being, even though but indirectly, a cause of ruin to the virtue of others. Besides, no apparel so much brings out the real beauty and charm of a noble girl or woman as a modest apparel. The same caution applies to dances, shows, songs, stories, jokes, conversations and games. Good girls will not tolerate them if they are immodest, double-meaning and suggestive; neither will they allow their escorts or lovers to endorse or take part in them.

The Young Men and Their Lady-Love

From the experiences of the aforesaid soldier the young men will learn to guard their eyes and to avoid the occasions of sin, the while they exercise a close watch over their thoughts and imaginations. Here, too, prevention is far easier than cure. And if they are desirous always to look upon their lady-love with tender reverence, sincere admiration and noble passion, they will be careful not to thrust her ignominiously from her pedestal of sweet maidenly innocence, purity and dignity, through ungallant, unmanly and unseemly advances of libertinism and profligacy.

With reference to the revulsion of sentiment in a man for a woman as a result of undue intimacy, we are given a frightful illustration of it in the Old Testament (2 Kings, 13, 1 sqq.).

In this case the girl was altogether innocent. We are told that Amnon loved Thamar, who was very beautiful. "And he was exceedingly fond of her: so that he fell sick for the love of her: for as she was a virgin, he thought it hard to do anything dishonestly with her." In an impulse of passion, however, he ravished her. "Then Amnon hated her with an exceeding great hatred: so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her before. And Amnon said to her: Get thee gone!"

"Get Thee Gone!"

The nature of both man and woman is the same today. Many an ardent and all-possessing love, that is allowed to run into indiscretions and immoral indulgences ends coldly and abruptly with the heartless charge of the young man to the girl, now debased, dishonored and deflowered: "Get thee gone!" Thamar no doubt found consolation and defense in the consciousness of having been completely innocent and without fault in her terrible misfortune. The case is infinitely sadder, when the conscience of the disowned and rejected girl tells her plainly and chidingly, that she brought on her loss and ruin upon herself by her weak and sensuous compliance with her lover's ignoble and vile advances.

Some time ago a professor of a university, addressing a class of young women on the psychology of courtship, said rather plainly: "Girls, if you want a husband, do not kiss him before you get him; if you do, you will not get him." There is a great deal of practical psychology in this pointed remark. Many promising courtships are stranded because of the cessation of the proper reserve and dignity between the lovers. One familiarity leads to another, and soon they are thoroughly tired of and disgusted with one another or, at any rate, the man wearies of the woman, whom he finds

to be easy and loose, and seeks or forces a reason to break up the courtship, and to tell her directly or indirectly, yet unmistakably: "Get thee gone!" This happens very often.

Pursuit Is Better than Possession

It will therefore behove every girl always to bear in mind, that for the man who is in love with her, pursuit is better than possession, mystery better than knowledge, and desire better than enjoyment throughout the entire period of courtship. A common saying expresses the same truth tersely and nervously by telling us, that no one runs after a street car after he has caught it.

And when the courtship goes on the rocks, the partners to it will be little apt to keep silence regarding the morality or, rather, the immorality of the other party, on whom they like to cast all the blame, for the disruption of their relations. Whoever, therefore, wants to play safe as to his or her reputation for virtue in the community, will be careful not to compromise himself or herself in courtship, the outcome of which is always problematical.

But sometimes, in spite of sinful intimacies in courtship, the couple marries anyway. The marriage gives little promise of being happy. The blessing of God, far from being called down upon it, was rather bidden to stay away, and

to be turned into a curse, by their vicious preparation for the marriage.

Three Sacrileges in Twenty-Four Hours

This the more, because of their sacrilegious reception of the holy sacrament of matrimony, which usually is the sequel of a low and immoral courtship, and by which the parties of it deprive themselves of the very graces of the sacrament, that are necessary for a blissful marriage. It is a deplorable fact, that many Catholic young people perpetrate their first sacrileges in consequence of the assumption or admission of unwarranted liberties in their company-keeping. Either they conceal these mortal sins in the confessional through a false shame or fear; or they confess them without genuine sorrow and the sincere purpose to quit them once and forever. Thus almost their entire courtship, which should be a holy preparation for the reception of a holy sacrament, and the entrance into a holy state, is spent in sacrilege, to which they put the ugly climax of receiving three sacraments: penance, Holy Communion and matrimony sacrilegiously the very day of their marriage. How can the blessing of God be expected to follow upon such irreligious conduct?

The Blessing of God: Where Is It?

And often, alas, the blessing of God is visibly, very visibly absent from such a marriage. The couple in question lost respect for and confidence in one another through their illicit practices in courtship. If they did not fear to be disloyal to God in a grievous manner then, what will keep them from being disloyal both to God and their mate after they are married?

It is an old joke about the woman, who asked the judge in court for a divorce from her husband. The judge asked her on what grounds she pleaded for a divorce. "My husband has grown cold and indifferent towards me," she replied. The judge wanted to know how long they were married. "Seven years," she said. "When did your husband begin to grow cold and indifferent to you?" the judge queried. "A year before we were married," she answered. This may seem ludicrous, but many couples marry, through human respect or other motives, after their mutual love is long spent and completely dead, in consequence, as a rule, of their indecent liberties and unholy intimacies in courtship. Because they presumed to indulge in the pleasures of marital love before they had God's sanction for it, God punishes them by allowing them to enter and live in marriage without love. And such a marriage is long, hard, wearisome, and un-

speakably trying. God will not be mocked. As everything else, love, too, can be sinfully squandered instead of being economically used and wisely treasured. The capacity of the human heart to love and be loved is limited, as is everything human. They who recklessly abuse and waste their capacity to love and to be loved before marriage have only themselves to blame, if their subsequent marriage will be loveless, joyless, cheerless and lifeless. Physiologically, too, the amorous excesses of lovers in courtship frequently undermine the nervous system and the general health, and thus pave the way to an unsatisfying and unhappy marriage. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom., 6, 23) in some form or other.

Childless Marriages

It may even not be rash to assert, that some marriages are and will always be childless for no other reason than the sinful intimacies preceding them. Partly the childlessness is a punishment of God, the One Author of life; and partly it is the effect of a physiological law. Everything can be wasted beyond redemption, human vitality not excepted.

Once married, you will be a long time married. The greater your store of mutual love when you enter marriage, the brighter the promise of a long and blissful marriage. Wise

couples, therefore, far from sinfully wasting, carefully and virtuously store in their hearts the great, deep and ardent love which courtship engenders in them, that it may avail them all the days of their subsequent marriage. In their eyes the period of courtship is symbolized by the seven fat years of Egypt; for in it, if they go about it wisely, they can make ample provision, in the way of mutual love, for all the years of matrimony that are ahead of them. For them, then, the life of marriage will not be lean or destitute of love, as it unfortunately is in many cases.

Even in married life, if it is to be happy and pleasing to God, the mutual carnal love of the couple may not go on unrestrained. There are many occasions when it must be held severely in check. If it is not checked, holy marriage is violated and God is offended. They will be strongest in controlling their sensuous love in marriage, who have learned to do it in courtship. And, as a result, both in courtship and in marriage, their higher mutual love, their warm friendship, high esteem and tender reverence for one another, will be the sweeter, the stronger, and the more lasting.

CHAPTER XX.

The Proper Conduct in Courtship

PART TWO.

> *"A holy and shame-faced woman is grace upon grace. And no price is worthy of a continent soul"* (*Ecclus.*, 26, 19, 20).

IN view of what has been said every sensible Catholic girl, in the season of courtship, will remain sensitively conscious and keenly jealous of her dignity and the sway she can exercise over her lover by her unflinching modesty and stainless purity. Either her present lover will one day be her husband or not. If not: if for some reason the courtship will be discontinued, she will then have nothing to regret, and no exposure to fear. If he will be her husband, she will be able, without being a hypocrite and affecting a modesty she does not possess, to walk up the aisle of the church to the altar on her wedding day, adorned with the bridal veil, indicative of her virginity; and

at the wedding ceremony she can offer her husband a hand that is pure and a heart that is clean. There will be high gratification in this, quite sufficient of itself to reward whatever self-control was exercised to obtain it. And later on in her married life her husband, whatever else may happen, will never be in a position to cut her by charging her with unchastity and looseness of conduct before her marriage. In this, too, there will be great satisfaction.

This pure, dignified and firm conduct of the girl in courtship renders the observance of chastity easy and delightful to her lover. From the beginning he is made to feel, albeit in a sweet and gracious manner, that nothing low or discreditable will ever be as much as thought of in their relations of love, and that the presence of God and their guardian angels will always be considered and respected in whatever they say or do.

He Stepped in the Mud

Of the Blessed Henry Suso of the Dominican Order the story is told, that one day, as he walked along the street, a woman came the other way. When they were about to meet, he stepped aside into the muddy road in order to yield the dry trodden path to the woman. She was surprised at this, and asked him, saying: "How is it, that you, a priest and theo-

logian, yield precedence to me, a woman?" He replied, that in every woman he somehow saw a reflection of the Blessed Mother, and in honoring woman he felt he was paying homage to Mary. These sentiments of heavenly chivalry should animate and guide every Catholic young man with reference to his lady-love. And she in her turn should behave in a manner as by her purity and innocence to remind him of Mary. Then there will be no danger of any deterioration of their courtship.

The Great Conquest

So much every decent girl should be in a position to ask of a man who pretends to love her enough as to consider her as his prospective wife, that he control himself sufficiently to reverence her honor and safeguard her virtue. In the Middle Ages, when chivalry flourished, knights were eager to demonstrate their devotion and loyalty to their fair ladies by conquests of giants, monsters and fierce adversaries. By their admiration and applause the ladies encouraged them to these conquests. Nowadays this chivalry of a fairy nature is no longer in vogue. But every Catholic girl ought to demand as an homage to herself and her innocence, that her lover achieve the greatest and the most worth-while conquest, namely the conquest of himself and his lower nature, and

avoid everything that might jar, however slightly, her finest sensibilities of maidenly purity. And on this splendid conquest she will compliment him dearly, delicately and continuously by her innocently fond, devoted and admiring conduct.

You Have a Mission to Perform

And even in his own personal private life every honorable Catholic young man, who plans some day to be married, will maintain himself in cleanness of soul and chastity of body. We read in the life of Cardinal Newman that, while he was still an Anglican, he was at one time traveling abroad, when he suddenly took very ill, and it seemed death was imminent. Somehow he was sure he was not going to die then and there for, as he said, he felt he had a mission to perform. The Catholic young man, who aims to be married some day, when temptations of impurity come upon him in this or that guise, should shut himself decidedly against their lure by saying: "I have a mission to perform. I want to become a worthy husband of a pure Catholic girl and, if it be the will of God, a decent and respectable father to her children. And I am not going to ruin or even jeopardize this grand mission through any personal lowness and excess."

Common Sense Rules

A few common sense measures carefully observed will help honorable lovers to keep their courtship on a high level, and a thing of beauty before God and men. First, they must not protract their courtship too long. Long and intense courtships usually prove morally ruinous. A definite and fixed period for a regular and constant courtship, to cover every case, can hardly be set and insisted on. Persons, temperaments, controlling circumstances and influences differ too much as that a uniform precise duration can be rigorously observed in every instance.

It would seem, however, that in keeping with the general view of virtuous people a year or two would be sufficient, as a rule, for a regular and respectable courtship. Within that time the lovers have plenty of occasion to get thoroughly acquainted with one another. If the period is much prolonged, there is danger that they will get to know one another too well for their own good, and hardly to the advantage of their prospective marriage.

Long Courtships Not Advisable

This is relative, of course, for some good young people can go together constantly for years and years without being at all the worse for it; others, again, after a regular company of

a month or two, especially if one or both have had previous experiences of company-keeping, have bidden goodbye to every sentiment of virtue, honor and mutual respect in their relations with each other. Still, all things considered, long regular courtships are usually perilous in themselves, and should be eschewed as much as possible.

Young people will therefore not begin a courtship unless they have good prospects of its happy termination into marriage within a reasonable season. They may thereby lose the opportunity of getting this or that person for a partner in marriage, it is true; but also they may get a better one instead. Economical reasons often force a courtship into an inordinate length. But they can usually be foreseen, and young people should not begin keeping company regularly, if there is no chance of settling down to an independent household for several years.

The Bugbear of Finance

In case financial difficulties or reverses only appear after the courtship is well under way, the parties are not to be blamed, as is evident. Yet if the situation calls for a long delay of the marriage beyond the reasonable aforesaid period, it would be advisable by mutual agreement to slacken the method of courtship, so that the

parties would not meet frequently and regularly, until there was hope of a proximate marriage.

Sometimes lovers are financially in a position to marry; but they unduly defer the marriage for the purpose of accumulating more money, so they can begin their married life with a certain style and display. This is a blunder, and often a costly one in more ways than one.

Other circumstances, too, at times counsel or impose an undesirable procrastination of marriage. Now it is the poor health of one of the lovers, now it is the father or mother of one or both of the lovers who have to be considered, and who somehow stand in the way of an immediate marriage. When this condition is an indefinite one, indicating nothing in this way or that, it is ordinarily folly merely to wait and wait until something finally develops. It is better to decide one way or the other: either to marry at once and make the most of the actual situation; or to dismiss the thought of the marriage once and for all, and act accordingly.

Why Wait?

Often young people, in a situation such as I have just mentioned or in a similar one, after having foolishly waited for years for some change of affairs, finally resolved to marry

under the same conditions which long before had prompted them to wait, as being decidedly prohibitive of their marriage. And then they regretted it keenly, that they had not married right away. Where there is a good will and a degree of common sense, there is a way of adjusting satisfactorily even such things or conditions as seem to baffle adjustment. In this regard, also, God helps them who help themselves.

Here, too, the sad fact must be noted, that a number of marriages owe their delay to the undue intimacies and obscene liberties indulged in during the period of courtship. Many a young man would unhesitatingly ask his lady friend to marry him, and to arrange for the celebration of the wedding at an early date, if he were not allowed the privileges of marriage before he is entitled to them. But since he, sinfully, enjoys the rights of marriage without the burdens of it, why should he be in a hurry to contract the binding obligations of matrimony?

What a Gentleman, and What a Friend!

Many a foolish girl, thinking she will hasten her marriage by yielding to the unwarranted advances of her gentleman friend, merely postpones it indefinitely or misses it entirely in the end. Let me remark that in this case "gentleman friend" and "lady friend" are misnomers.

The man who conducts himself so basely in courtship is neither a gentleman nor a friend, as little as the girl who permits such obscenities is a lady or a friend.

A further prudential caution employed by conscientious lovers to keep their courtship neat and decorous consists in meeting neither too often nor too long. For a lover to call on his lady friend twice a week seems to be normally enough. Once he begins to call every day, or nearly every day, the courtship starts to lose its ideal aspect, at least in the eyes of others. Neighbors and relatives begin to wonder, if the young people are not already married; if not, they ought to be, since they are always together. This immoderate frequency of meetings is one of the best ways to prepare for a loveless, unromantic and unpoetic marriage, for it easily begets mutual ennui and lack of attraction. In other words the lovers are often heartily tired of and bored with one another before the marriage takes place.

Those Perilous Midnight Hours

The same menace is prevalent, only with a greater degree of danger, when the meetings are unduly prolonged far into the night and even the next morning. This is more likely to happen when the couple is alone and unobserved. The midnight hours are said

to be the hours of love. They might better be called the hours of the devil, for the midnight love of unchaperoned lovers is not seldom unholy, indecent and wicked. Then it is that many a first mortal sin is committed, many an innocence is lost, and many a virginity is forfeited forever.

It is a sorry event and a very sad experience for the girl when, before she retires to sleep, she kneels at her bed, and for the first time in her life she is ashamed to look up to the picture of the Sacred Heart or the Blessed Mother hanging above, for her eyes have lost their innocent gaze, and her heart the purity of its beat of love. And again the following morning, when she mortally dreads to meet her mother at all, fearing lest her mother will read from her face, that her record of modesty is blasted, and that her high honor and pride of virtue have made room for the utter shame and disgrace of vice.

The Wages of Sin

If only worse consequences do not ensue. Her shame may become public to the everlasting dishonor of her family. And her poor mother will eat her heart away in anguish, her father will curse the day when she was born, and her brothers and sisters will spit out every time they hear the mention of her name. And,

of course, her vile and treacherous lover, who abused the hospitality of her home in so infamous a manner, will fare no better. His name will be a byword of obloquy and ignominy to all decent men and women. They say the wages of sin are usually paid in a lump. Woe to the sinner, when this lump payment of a sudden falls due.

This is not mere empty rhetoric, or unalloyed fiction. Were the recurrence of these sad events only less common! If you do not want them to be your portion, be wise betimes, and God-fearing, and virtuous. Use a further means for the protection of your courtship, namely prudent and reliable chaperonage. Be alone with your beloved as little as possible. Always endeavor to have with you reliable witnesses and guarantors of the integrity and innocence of your courtship at home, in the automobile and elsewhere.

Safety in Numbers

In this regard there is great safety in numbers, for your reputation as well as for your morality. The less you are alone before marriage, the more you will enjoy being alone after marriage. Have your courtship to consist for a great part in the virtuous and easy enjoyment of music, dances, games, rides and sports with others besides yourselves. You will thus

run less risk of growing weary of each other and of being an occasion of sin to each other. They say, two are company, three are a crowd: and quite a crowd, when two of them are lovers who are eager to be alone. Yet it is far better for them to be in ever so much of a crowd, than to have the devil to be the third party in their clandestine rendezvous, as he desires always to be and, unfortunately, often is.

"What Can We Do About It?"

Some of my readers, reading this, may grow sad and say within themselves: "Had we only thought of all this sooner. Alas, now it is too late. The harm is done. Our courtship has gone the way of sin. Our love has degenerated into licentiousness and wantonness. What can we do about it?" You can do a great deal about it. Begin by making a clean breast of your unclean story in the holy tribunal of penance. Make a sincere and contrite confession; regain your peace of soul and friendship with God; at Holy Communion ask for His blessing to start your courtship anew, and henceforth to preserve it virtuous and pure in His sight. God is quick to forgive and to forget the past, provided you are ready to love and serve Him in the uprightness of your hearts. And His future blessings will not be less because of your past transgressions, once you

sincerely repent of and heartily deplore them, and comply with our Lord's injunction to the adulteress: "Go, and now sin no more" (John, 8, 11).

The Lord Is Merciful

In the humility and candor of your heart, and with a lively trust in God's mercy, say with the Psalmist: "I will go in to the altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth. . . . Why art thou sad, my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him: the salvation of my countenance, and my God" (Ps. 42, 4-6). "The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember. According to Thy mercy remember Thou me: for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord" (Ps. 24, 7). And in answer to this pleading prayer, "thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's" for "the Lord is compassionate and merciful: longsuffering and plenteous in mercy" (Ps. 102, 5, 8).

You Say: Get Thee Gone!

You say: "I am eager to do only what is right in courtship: but my partner insists on certain privileges to which he is not entitled, and threatens to leave me and break our engagement, if I do not kiss him and otherwise yield to him. What am I to do?" Let him go.

It will be good riddance. It is far better that you, from motives of virtue, charge him, saying: "Get thee gone!" than that he later on, from a feeling of disgust and contempt, make the charge to you.

A Catholic young man who is persistent not only in grievously offending God himself, but in demanding that his companion and prospective wife should do the same, is not worthy of a good and decent girl, and threatens to make a poor, unreliable and unfaithful husband.

The mere fact, that he is eager to enjoy certain intimacies to which he knows he has no claim, creates a prejudice against the very sincerity of his courtship. Why should he be so impatient to obtain in a base and sinful manner what he may count on having sooner or later for life in an honorable and sacred manner?

Thank God you have found him out in his real character before it was too late. Devote no regret whatever to his departure. He does not deserve it. Rather congratulate yourself on it. And be sure God will take care of you for your loyalty to Him, and your good sense in your own behalf. He will give you an honorable and worth-while husband in His own time and manner.

A Mere Kiss

The young man who has any sense of virtue and principle of honor sincerely appreciates and delicately respects his girl friend's concern for her modesty and innocence, and loves her the more for it. He knows that her very declension of a mere kiss is a convincing sign of her great shyness and fear of being gradually beguiled into the loss of what she considers, and what he also considers, her greatest treasure. Finally—and this ought to carry much weight—from her being so reserved, cautious and pure towards him, he rightly judges, that she has behaved in like manner towards whatever previous lovers she may have had; and he is satisfied that, if ever he leads her to the altar of God, he will receive for his wife "a chaste virgin" (2 Cor., 11, 2). Whereas, if the girl he is wooing is easy and ready to grant unmaidenly privileges and familiarities to him, he will naturally infer that she has been or is equally loose and wanton in her conduct towards other lovers, and ere long he will tire of her with disgust and say to her: "Get thee gone!"

Adam and Eve

It is but just to re-state in this connection, that both parties are usually equally guilty of the mutual irregularities committed or toler-

ated in courtship. And the one blaming the other for them is ordinarily nothing else than the Adam and Eve stunt in paradise. Neither was justified before, and both were cursed and punished by, God.

A Base Ruse

Here I should perhaps not make mention of the base ruse employed by many a so-called lover in his attempt to seduce the girl he is courting. He tries to persuade her that, because they are so much in love, and are already engaged, and will soon be husband and wife anyway, it is quite in order for them to become intimately acquainted; in fact it is the only way for them to find out, before it is too late, if they are well matched and intended for one another at all.

This is evidently the language of the demon of impurity. And the girl who allows her lover even distantly to make so gross an intimation to her, has already permitted him far too familiar an approach, and has to a great extent forgone her dignity and reserve with regard to him. She is partly to blame, and seriously so, if he presumes to insinuate anything so crudely indecent and utterly disreputable. The girl who has any regard for her honor never tolerates so vile and suggestive a language. However great, deep and ardent

may be their mutual love, and however certain and imminent their marriage, their mere courtship or betrothal gives lovers no mutual sexual rights or liberties whatsoever. It is only through the sacred contract of marriage, duly entered into, that they acquire any claim at all upon one another's bodies. Before this contract has been ratified with the proper formality, every sexual intimacy with one another is a mortal violation of chastity and an open infringement of the sacred rights of God.

The Rights of Lovers

You ask finally: "Have lovers, then, no mutual rights or privileges at all, for being lovers? May they bestow upon one another no marks of love, no tokens of affection, and no signs of devotion? How are they to convince each other of their great love for one another, if they may not give external and sensible expression to it?" Indeed they may and should manifest and express their mutual love in various ways and by divers tokens; but always within the bounds of honor, virtue and innocence. In fact, by containing itself within these bounds in spite of all its ardor and force, true love becomes more manifest in its disinterested purity, sincerity and loyalty, than if it would run into carnal excesses and lascivious indulgences for its own selfish gratification.

Are lovers allowed to kiss one another? is a question often asked. The asking at least indicates a certain delicacy of conscience. They who sincerely put this query seem to want to do the right thing. For this they are to be commended. Lovers, who are engaged to be married, may exchange respectable marks of affection and love in a moderate degree. A modest kiss falls well within this category. But it must remain modest, and must not become wilfully passionate and sensuous, and, as a result, grievously sinful.

The Passionate Kiss

It will easily and soon become so if it is repeated often at the same meeting. One friendly and pure goodnight kiss is not dangerous for engaged couples. It ought to be sufficient, however. The passionate and lingering kiss, or the so-called soul kiss between lovers, even if they are engaged, is a mortal sin, because it offers the occasion and inducement to grievous sensuous emotions and immodest gratifications.

In general it may be said, that whatever conduct exposes you or your partner to the proximate danger of yielding to impurity in thought, desire, feeling or action, is a mortal sin. If you say, that passionate or soul kisses do not involve this danger for you or your com-

panion, it is an evident sign that by carnal self-indulgence you have dulled your conscience into gross insensibility, and have blinded your soul into crass self-deception.

Incipient or advanced lovers, who are not yet engaged to be married, should not at all indulge in kissing and similar demonstrations of intimate and ardent love, since their relations are not close enough to warrant it. And, if they embark at so early a stage upon these amorous practices, there is every danger that they will soon proceed from what appears innocent and modest to what they know is not, and the magnitude of the harm and disaster that will ensue to both parties will likely outrun all their calculations. But I have spoken of this danger so much in the foregoing pages, that there is no use of my reverting to the discussion of the unpleasant and malodorous thing again.

"Am I My Brother's Keeper?"

I only want to add in the interest of the good and innocent girls who are reading this book, that even if they should have no evil thoughts or desires whatsoever in allowing themselves to be kissed and petted by their escorts, they must remember, that they may be the occasion of gross sins of immoral thoughts, desires and emotions to their partners. Man is by nature more passionate than woman. It will behove

girls, who are keeping company, always to bear this in mind, if they do not want to be an occasion of sin and ruin, by their dress, attitude or behavior, to the man they profess to love more than anyone else in all the world.

A virtuous girl-companion can be a man's most powerful inspiration to chastity and honor; even as a loose and frivolous "lady-friend" can be his greatest and most fatal temptation to unchastity and dishonor. A pure girl is in the best sense of the word a guardian angel to her escort's virtue; an immodest girl is the surest stone of scandal to her companion's purity.

The Exemplary Convert

It not seldom happens, that a Catholic priest receives into the Church a non-Catholic woman, either immediately before or some time after her marriage. What often strikes him in these instances is to learn, how pure and innocent this woman has maintained herself throughout her courtship. From a mere natural sense of modesty and propriety she preserved her virtue unstained and her honor unseared. She kept her courtship dignified, high and ideal. And the priest is inclined to sigh in his heart: "If only all our Catholic girls, fortified as they are by the high motives of faith and the strength of the holy sacraments, would always

maintain the same sublime standard in their courtship!" No wonder God often gives those non-Catholic women the grace of holy faith in view of the purity of their lives.

A Safe Rule

It is a well-known rule by which lovers are told they can gage the propriety or impropriety of their mutual conduct: "Never do anything, when the two of you are alone, which you would be ashamed to do in the presence of your parents; or which you would be ashamed to reveal to your parents." This rule, if closely observed, will avail much. In addition to it, conscientious lovers, whenever a serious doubt as to their behavior in courtship arises in their minds, sincerely and at once seek information and guidance from their confessor and spiritual director, the physician of their soul. If they are always frank with him and carefully follow his advice, their courtship will cause them neither remorse in the present nor regret in the future.

Love's Purposes

After all, it is wholesome for all candidates for marriage to remember, that nature does not want the love between the sexes to serve purposes of mere trifling and frivolous dalliance and sentimental diversion and adventure. It

desires this love to achieve ulterior and far more sacred and consequential purposes, affecting present and future lives. And no one can toy with this elemental force of nature, with an aim merely to taste its passing sweetness but to avoid its lasting consequences, without incurring nature's severe penalty and experiencing its terrific vengeance. Nature is a very hard and inexorable creditor when its rights are flouted and its privileges abused.

He Went to See His Girl

St. Bernardine of Siena is known as one of the greatest missionaries of the Franciscan Order and the entire Church. When he was a young man of about sixteen years, he had already lost his mother through death. He received much of his home education from his aunt and his elder sister, who were women of God, and very solicitous that he should be brought up in the fear of the Lord and righteousness of life. He had already given evidence of his desire of becoming a friar and a missionary, at which they rejoiced not a little.

They began to observe, however, that Bernardine went out for a walk every afternoon and stayed away from home for hours. They suspected no evil. Yet to satisfy their minds, they asked him where he went and how he spent so much time day for day. He playfully

replied: "I go to see my girl." When they asked him her name, he answered he could not divulge her name, but he could tell them that she was the best, the dearest, the most beautiful and charming girl imaginable; and that she had completely conquered his love and fascinated him beyond expression. They felt he was joking. Yet they were surprised that he spoke so glowingly and ecstatically of a girl—he, who was resolved to become a friar ere long. To quiet their minds in the matter, they decided they would not question him anymore on the subject, but the following day they would furtively trail him to see where and to whom he paid the daily long visits.

The Pious Detectives

The next day Bernardine left the house as usual. The ladies seemed unconcerned and busy with the chores of the house. He was no sooner out on the street when they hastened to follow him at a safe distance, so he would not become aware of them. He sauntered along gaily and briskly, even as a young knight yearning to meet his lady love. He passed through one of the gates of the city of Siena, proceeded along a country lane and bent into a grove. The two women followed him carefully, and at no slow pace. When they approached the grove, they heard sweet singing,

and presently a little way off they saw Bernardine kneeling in a pretty grotto before a beauteous statue of Our Lady, chanting hymns of love to her with all the ardor of his heart and all the consecration of his soul. He did not know he was not alone.

After observing and listening to him for a while, not without great joy and holy envy, the detectives quietly stole away and returned home, altogether convinced that Bernardine's girl was the sweetest and dearest of maidens, and fully deserving of all his love, admiration and veneration. "No wonder he looks so heavenly and so saintly," they said to one another, "every time he returns from a visit to this queen of his heart."

When Lovers Meet

Whenever a Catholic young man calls on a Catholic girl, he ought to approach her, attracted by her innocence and virtue. And he ought to return from his visit to her a better man than he came, more than ever charmed by the splendor of feminine goodness, more inspired with a love for genuine chastity, and more resolved to become a good and worthy husband of so noble and dear a girl.

The man's influence on the girl must be proportionally beneficial. Because of his admiration for genuine feminine excellence and

dignity, he should confirm and encourage her continually in the acquisition and maintenance of what is the chief treasure and greatest charm of woman. In a word, their every meeting should be mutually sacramental, in a way; that is, it ought to be fraught with graces of mutual edification and inspiration, that make for beauty and solidity of virtue and character before God and men.

The Lover of Lovers

To achieve this, they will not fail to receive worthily every month the Most Holy Eucharist, the Bread of Angels, and the Wine that fosters purity. If they receive this heavenly tonic of angelic chastity every week or, preferably, every day, their difficulties in keeping their courtship holy, an object of joy to God and men, will vanish almost entirely. The more the marriage approaches, the closer they will both cling to Jesus, the divine Lover of pure lovers, and the only reliable guarantor of their future conjugal bliss. The practice of making a retreat shortly before the reception of matrimony, and of communing alone with God on the greatness and sacredness of it, is not rare, and to those who are in a position to make it, it is hereby warmly recommended.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Immediate Preparation for Marriage

"And taking the right hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying: God . . . be with you, and may He join you together, and fulfill His blessing in you" (Tob., 7, 15).

A BISHOP was keeping his episcopal visitation in a parish. In the catechism class, before he administered confirmation, he asked one of the boys: "What is matrimony?" The youngster replied clearly and rapidly: "Matrimony is a place of torment where are detained the souls of those who have sinned until they have sufficiently atoned for their sins." The pastor who was present, stopped the boy, saying: "You are thinking of purgatory." "Let him go," the bishop remarked, "for all you and I know, the boy may be right after all."

Often enough, alas, matrimony is a purgatory. Sometimes it is a hell. Frequently, however, it is a paradise. It will be a paradise

for those who in their preparation for and conduct in marriage deserve the promise of God in the Bible: "Blessed are all they that fear the Lord; that walk in His ways" (Ps. 127, 1).

Paradise Had Its Shadows

But even paradise had its forbidden tree and its insidious serpent. So, too, the happiest marriage has its trials and its dangers. It is good for young people, who are on the point of being married, to bear this well in mind and, consequently, to take a common sense view of marriage before they enter upon it. They will then not expect too much from marriage and in marriage, and they will run less risk of being bitterly disappointed and poignantly disabused, as many are soon, very soon, after their marriage.

An aged but very happy couple were celebrating their golden wedding. There was much rejoicing, merry-making and offering of congratulations and good wishes. The numerous young grandchildren of both sexes asked the jubilarian how he fared so well in marriage. They were eager to marry, some day, too; hence they wanted the recipe for a long and blessed marriage. He answered: "Let me tell you the secret with reference to your partner, briefly but comprehensively: Keep both eyes open, before you marry; but shut one and keep

the other only half open after you marry. Because I acted in this manner," he added, not without a roguish but loving glance at his wife, "I got along so well." For doing exactly the contrary many others are very unhappy in marriage. They are practically blind with love to the faults of their mate before marriage; but they are very observant and critical of them after marriage.

It is an oft repeated story of the soldier who, returning from a hard war, was carried away by the spirit of romance, poetry and love. He became infatuated with whom he considered the prettiest and loveliest girl he had ever met or seen. Her charms of personal appearance, the lustre of her eyes, the beauty of her complexion, her pearly teeth, and the color of her hair captivated him completely. She in turn admired his manly stature, and Apollo-like figure, and dignified bearing. His marvelous shoulders, arms and limbs were those of a Greek god in her eyes. When, then, he proposed marriage to her with much ardor and eagerness, she accepted his proposal with sentiments of true reciprocity.

Everything was lovely until they were married, when suddenly their eyes were opened to the actual facts of the case. He soon noticed, that the very things which had ravished him most in his lady-love were not real and natural, but borrowed and artificial:

her hair, her teeth, her complexion, the very brightness of her eyes were fictitious and made to order. It was a shock to him, of course. Yet he was equal to the occasion. Saying: "As you do unto me, I do unto you," he unscrewed one of his limbs, which was of cork; and disengaged one of his arms, which was of rubber. In the war he had lost a limb and an arm, and had them replaced later on by artificial imitations. "Now we are even," he said with a degree of satisfaction. How often, alas, are the various corporal, mental and moral charms of lovers found to be mere shallow fictions or poor imitations, in the prosaic sobriety and commonplace routine of married life! Even as Jacob thought he was marrying beautiful Rachel while he was getting the bleareyed Lia for his wife, so it is said that most people do not marry whom they think they are marrying. Yet it was Lia who bore Juda, one of the forefathers of Jesus. And Jacob's disappointment proved to be his greatest blessing. This happens often in marriage.

Another old story is that of a couple who were very much in love and, consequently, completely blind to one another's faults until five years after they were married. Then, on an unfortunate day, they got into vicious argument, as a result of which their love grew cold, and they began to see each other just as they were. To his great horror the man noticed,

that his wife had an ugly cast in her eye. He had never observed this before, but always looked upon her as a paragon of feminine pulchritude. He told her of it, rather sharply. She then discovered that he had a mean wart near his nose. It had escaped her hitherto. She let him know how hideous he looked. One shocking discovery brought on another. Soon they could no longer suffer one another's presence. They became estranged and separated. This story, whatever may be its historical probability or lack of it, carries the moral, that it is preferable for lovers to open their eyes well to each other's blemishes, physical and moral, before marriage, rather than after marriage.

Disappointments in Marriage

Human nature being what it is, no two characters are so well balanced, and no two dispositions are so harmoniously poised, as to fit into each other in the proximity and intimacy of married life, as husband and wife, without considerable rectification and adjustment. And all those who contemplate marriage will do well in calculating on the necessity of a great deal of rearrangement in their own individual case after they are married, no matter to whom, and in being ready for it. This will forestall many a bitter disillusionment and

many a keen regret, in addition to worse eventualities. Many, if not the majority, of the disappointments in married life that seriously affect its happiness develop, not because the parties are what they are found to be after marriage, but because certain exaggerated and unwarranted expectations and appraisals of them had been formed and entertained by their mates before marriage.

The fault lay not in the realistic development after marriage, but in the extravagant illusions preceding it. A young man who is flattering himself he is getting for his wife a faultless angel who will do nothing but remind him of heaven by her person and carriage; and the young lady who is sure she is marrying a perfect knight, whose one occupation after marriage will be to carry her on his hands and be at her bidding as a prince is to the fairy in the tale, are evidently too young, inexperienced and immature to launch out into the sea of matrimony, in which there are many and various treacherous cliffs to waylay and wreck their guileless and unsuspecting matrimonial craft.

Picture It As Black As Possible

A Franciscan missionary bishop of China, returning to his native Religious province to recruit missionaries for his district, frankly told the Franciscan clerics in submitting his

case to them that, if they had a desire to enlist for his mission, they should picture the conditions of a missionary in China as black and disagreeable as possible; and yet they could be sure that, when they got there, they would find conditions even much worse than they had pictured them. Young people contemplating marriage might do well in following the same method. Of course, they would not invariably find marriage harder than they thus pictured it: but a little sobriety in the anticipations of married life will always make for more real contentment in the reality of it.

In married life as well as in the convent many candidates find much more happiness than they looked forward to. With the queen of Saba they exclaim gleefully after their joyous experiences of the life they have embraced: "I did not believe them that told me, till I came myself, and saw with my own eyes, and have found that the half hath not been told me" (3 Kings, 10, 7). But these are usually the ones who were virtuously sober and circumspect in embracing the life, and indulged in no exaggerated conceptions of its bliss.

He Whipped It

A young man came to a monastery and requested the superior to admit him as a member of the order. After looking him over carefully,

the superior conducted him into the inner court of the cloister, led him up to a statue of a youth that was standing near by, and bade him to praise, pet and fondle the statue for ten minutes, and then to come and report to him in his cell. When the young man reported, the superior asked him how the statue behaved. He replied that it showed no signs of approval or disapproval. Then the superior bade the youth to take a whip which he handed him, and to lash the statue viciously for ten minutes, and again to report to him. When he returned, and the superior asked him how the statue acted under the lashes, he answered that it behaved exactly as it did whilst it was being caressed. The superior rejoined: "If you can do the same in the convent; if you can suffer both praise and blame, reward and punishment with similar equanimity as the statue, even though in a different, namely a rational manner, then you are a fit subject for the monastery: otherwise I should advise you not to enter." The point of this story is as applicable to candidates for marriage as it is to postulants for the Religious life.

To Be Like a Child

An venerable friar, who had spent a long life in the convent, was asked what he found to be the most difficult feature in religious life. He

replied: "Always to be like a child, that is under obedience, and has to be asking for permission to do or to have this or that, all the time." In married life, too, this same child-like attitude, although manifested somewhat differently, stands all men and women, longing for marital happiness, in good stead. Even as in the convent, this attitude is hard to maintain in marriage, also; but it pays in both instances. The words of Jesus come to mind: "Amen I say to you, unless . . . you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt., 18, 3); or, with reference to our subject: you shall not be happy in the life you choose.

"Love Is Strong as Death"

Another inference we draw from all that has been said is the all-importance of love in married life. What the sun is in the physical life of the world, love is in the sphere of married life. Of it should be verified in every Christian marriage the words of the Apostle: "Charity [love] never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed" (1 Cor., 1, 13, 8). Youth will cease; beauty will fade; health will fail; friends will drop away; fame will vanish: just so love endures, strong, deep, devoted and sweet between husband and wife,

the disappearance of all else can easily be suffered: whereas if love dies away, no matter what else remains, married life is but a sad and pitiable spectre of what it pretends and professes to be. "Love is strong as death" (Cant., 8, 6).

The Girls Did Not Like Him

In conclusion I shall tell a story from the life of the great Catholic German parliamentarian, Ludwig Windthorst. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he did as much for the Catholic Church in Germany, in the last century, by fighting for and safeguarding its rights, than any layman, priest, bishop or cardinal. It was he particularly who successfully resisted and duly humiliated the powerful Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor. Windthorst was puny of stature and ungainly of figure; hence in his youth the girls were not especially interested in and fond of him. He had fallen in love with the charming daughter of a good Catholic family and, strong of will as he was, he was determined to win her for his wife, cost what it might.

At first she gave him no encouragement. He persisted in his advances, however, hoping against hope, that her heart would gradually soften towards him. One evening he was standing under the window of her room, which was in the second story in the rear of her home,

and he serenaded her feelingly and intensely. Going backwards to look up and see if she was nodding approval, he forgot about the creek behind him, when he presently lost his footing and fell helpless into the water. As she saw him sprawling and splashing in the water, the young woman took pity on him. She came down from her room and asked him in the house to recover himself. While he was there they conversed, and ere long the girl took quite a fancy to him. She soon reciprocated his love fully, and in due time they were married.

The Golden Jubilee

When, after a half century, they celebrated the golden jubilee of their marriage, all Catholic Germany gathered in its representatives to do honor to the Great Little Man, who for many years was their captain and leader in the fierce struggle for their rights as citizens and Catholics. It was a grand demonstration of homage, recognition, reverence and love. The aged warrior of Christ was visibly touched. He was asked to make a speech. Even in his old age the marvelous and thrilling eloquence of his youth had not forsaken him.

As he and his wife stood before the cheering and applauding audience, he motioned for silence and attention and said with much pathos and great earnestness: "My friends,

you are not going to expect of me, that I tell you how much I appreciate and how deeply I am impressed by the grand and wholehearted exhibition of your love, gratitude and respect for me on this occasion. But I want to say and bring home to you this one thing: If in my life I have succeeded in doing something worth while for God, my Church and my country, I owe the achievement of it, after to God, to this noble woman at my side, whom God gave me as my helpmate. But for her encouragement, stimulation and inspiration I should not be worthy of your plaudits and encomiums today. If you feel you must honor me, you must honor her as well, for she made me what I am." The whole crowd broke into loud and endless applause at this fine and noble admission of the great man.

They Were Real Mutual Helpmates

To put it briefly, the two of them carried out the design of God, who created man and woman to be helpmates to one another in marriage, and mutually to inspire and assist one another to the highest human perfection, efficiency and happiness. To every engaged couple I recall the words of Jesus: "Go, and do thou in like manner" (Luke, 10, 37).

To the prospective Catholic husband who is reading this book I beg to say: If you are going

to achieve success in life: not so much financially, perhaps, politically, socially or professionally: but, what counts infinitely more, morally and religiously; if you are going to be a fine Catholic man, a devoted husband, a good father and a loyal citizen; if you are going to keep the faith and hand it down to your children and your children's children pure, staunch and dynamic, even as you received it from your father—and greater and more substantial success than this there is none in life—: this will depend, after God, on the girl who will be your wife, and on the manner in which you behave towards her before and after marriage.

Some good girl is storing away and guarding carefully and jealously all the affections of her heart, all the admiration of her soul, all the noble impulses of her emotional nature, in order to bestow them some day completely and perennially upon you, the God-given husband of her bosom, and by this bestowal to stimulate and inspire you to your best endeavors and highest self-expression. And, of course, I say the same in a similar manner to every prospective Catholic wife.

One Great and Beautiful Day

As to the actual celebration of your marriage, it is ordinarily advisable to endow it with all the religious and spiritual solemnity and im-

pressiveness your condition and circumstances permit. It is one great day in your lives, and it should be rendered so beautiful and grand, as a holy day in the best sense of the word, that the remembrance of it will always be joyous, grateful, and fragrant with the aroma of heaven. Even as the neo-presbyter loves to render the day of his first Holy Mass forever sweetly and deliciously memorable, so should marriage candidates aim to make their wedding day an event of godly beauty and inspiring recollections. They will do this eminently by being married in union with Holy Mass.

In good time approach the respective pastor who has jurisdiction over the wedding—it is usually the pastor of the bride—and abide by his instructions. There are certain formalities that have to be attended to, which he will not fail to mention. It is a pious practice of good Catholics who are about to be married to make a general confession some time before the marriage takes place. It is of the greatest importance to be perfectly sincere in the confession before the marriage, especially with reference to possible sexual improprieties that may have taken place, in order to obtain the state of grace and to receive matrimony worthily and efficaciously. It will be edifying and invite God's blessing upon the marriage, if not

only the wedding couple, but the witnesses, too, receive Holy Communion at the nuptial Mass.

The matrimonial candidates will do well by bearing in mind, that the recipients of the holy sacrament of marriage are at the same time the ministers of it, to themselves and to one another. The priest conferred baptism upon you, and he also administers the sacraments of penance and Holy Eucharist to you. The bishop bestowed upon you the sacrament of confirmation. But when you marry, the priest does not perform the sacrament for you. He is only the Church's official witness of the sacrament's performance and reception. The parties to the wedding not only receive but also administer the sacrament of matrimony to themselves and to each other by the consent expressed through the words of the sacred contract. They therefore have an additional reason to be in the state of grace while speaking the momentous words of nuptial consent.

The Two Models

In the end I shall be excused if I again exhort my young readers, who plan to embrace married life, to have their two great sacred models before them as sources of inspiration and encouragement from the beginning to the end of their matrimony. Their first model is the marriage of the Blessed Mother and St.

Joseph. They were poor and hard-working people. They had serious misfortunes and troubles, for instance: their failure to obtain suitable lodgings at the birth of Christ, their flight into Egypt, and the loss of the divine Child. But, thanks to their fear of the Lord and their mutual love, all their trials were easily borne, and tended rather to cement than slacken their sweet conjugal union.

There was a time, indeed, when Joseph, yet unacquainted with the mystery of the incarnation, "was minded to put her [Mary] away privately" (Matt., 1, 19). But an angel of God warned him against it. What a terrible mistake would Joseph have made in jeopardy of his own best interests, had he separated from Mary! For one thing, he might never have died in the loving arms of Jesus and Mary. Even so Catholic married people will ordinarily consult their welfare best if, instead of hastily deciding upon a rupture and a separation, when things of a mysterious or unpleasant nature develop, they man themselves to rise above all their difficulties and tribulations, with the help of their conjugal love, and their fear of and trust in the Lord. The sequel will as a rule distinctly justify and amply reward their self-control and wise sacrifice of personal bents and preferences.

"Prepared as a Bride"

The other even more perfect model of their marriage must be the union of Christ with the Church: infinitely tender, unreservedly loyal, unflinchingly constant and unspeakably sweet: the source of everlasting glory and triumph and bliss for both in the realm of God, the heaven of heavens. If the husband loves his wife as Christ loves the Church; and the wife is devoted to her husband, as the Church is devoted to Christ: their marriage on earth will be a likeness of the Church as described by St. John in these words: "I saw the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Apoc., 21, 2). And as a reward for their faithful Christian marriage, God, in His own day and in His own home, "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be anymore, for the former things are passed away" (ib., 4).*

*The readers who are about or soon to be married will find much timely instruction regarding the rights and duties of married people in the author's book: "Plain Talks on Marriage." See advertisement in the rear of this book.

CHAPTER XXII.

Jesus Christ, the Model of Youth

"Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments" (*Cant.*, 1, 3).

WHILE there is a certain gradation in the vocations open to young people, one being higher and holier in itself than another, after all it does not matter so much to what life one is called by God, as that he faithfully responds to the vocation given him by God. "There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, Who worketh all in all" (I Cor., 12, 4-6). "I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called" (Eph., 4, 1).

Every young person who wants to make a distinct and permanent success of life has only to "look and make it according to the pattern, that was shown [thee] on the mount" (Ex.,

25, 40). The mount is Mt. Calvary, the pattern is Jesus Christ. Whoever loves, clings to, and copies Jesus Christ will be sure to conquer and triumph in the end. For "who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (1 John, 5, 5), and for whom Jesus is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Apoc., 1, 8)?

A Champion and a Hero

Conquest: final, complete, and indisputable conquest, is something that appeals strongly to every normal young person. Everyone wants to be on the winning side, and is ambitious to be a champion and a hero. Moreover, young people do not live in the past, but in the present and the future. Past glories do not interest them; they are concerned about present victories, which have results for the future. For both these reasons every sensible young person is for and with Jesus Christ.

His cause is sure to win in the end. "Have confidence," He says, "I have overcome the world" (John, 16, 33). "These [the forces of sin] shall fight with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, because He is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and elect, and faithful" (Apoc., 17, 14). They who seek ultimate success

independently of Him are foredoomed to disappointment—according to His emphatic declaration: "He that is not with Me, is against Me; and He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth" (Luke, 11, 23).

Jesus Christ Forever

Secondly our Lord is as much a conqueror in the present and for the future as He has ever been in the past. Other conquerors have had their brief appearance on the stage of life, soon to disappear forever. They played their little part in the world's drama, and then vanished in the shadows of history. Christ alone is as much alive and as victorious today as He has unceasingly been in the last nineteen centuries; and however long human society will continue through the ages, the one outstanding, conquering and domineering figure of it will be Christ, the Son of the living God: "Jesus Christ yesterday, and today: and the same forever" (Hebr., 13, 8).

In testimony of this evident, unquestioned and unquestionable perennial victory of Christ over the world, I beg to refer again to the Egyptian obelisk in St. Peter's Square in Rome, which contains the triumphant inscription: "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat" — Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules. In the hundreds of years since

the obelisk has been proclaiming not only the past but also the present conquering power of Christ to all the nations of the world—representatives of every nation pass to observe and admire it daily—no sensible man has ever entertained fears or misgivings lest the inscription might ever get to be out of date. Everyone who knows history and the psychology of mankind is rather convinced that thousands of years after the venerable monolith, or obelisk, shall have crumbled into dust together with the inscription, even then it will be just as true as it is today that: Christ conquers, Christ reigns, and Christ rules. If the world stands long enough, that obelisk may often have to be replaced by a new one, but the inscription will never have to be changed.

The Likes and Dislikes of Young People

Whatever else appeals to and attracts young people forcibly and irresistibly has its source and highest expression in Christ. They love youth and great accomplishments in youth. He never went beyond youth in His mortal life, and He redeemed, civilized, ennobled, purified and sanctified all mankind in His early thirties. They love beauty, personal charm, fascination and power. As a youth of twelve years, "Jesus advanced in wisdom, and

age, and grace with God and men" (Luke, 2, 52). "And a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son" (Luke, 9, 35). "The people were in admiration at His doctrine; for He was teaching them as one having power" (Matt., 7, 29). "And so much the more did they wonder, saying: He hath done all things well" (Mark, 7, 37).

Young people dislike high-handed rule and autocracy; they love condescension and democracy. Jesus says: "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you" (John, 15, 15). "You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John, 13, 13-15).

Friendship and Love

Young people are fond of friendship and love. Jesus says: "He that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. . . . If anyone love Me, . . . We will come to him, and will make our abode with him. As the Father hath loved Me,

I also have loved you. Abide in My love. This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John, chapters 14 and 15).

Young people are desirous of peace of mind. Our Lord says: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (John, 14, 27).

Young people are eager to possess joy. Of this Jesus declares: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled. . . . Your heart will rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you" (John, 15, 16).

Finally young people love knowledge, truth and life. Whoever can impart these to them in a reliable manner and a high degree, wins their confidence, attachment and loyalty. Jesus assures them, saying: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by Me" (John, 14, 6). "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John, 10, 10). "The water that I will give . . . , shall become . . . a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting" (John, 4, 14). "Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John, 17, 3).

Oh, This Is the Life!

Young people, especially when they experience certain first thrills of joy and success, love to cry out with rapturous delight: "Oh, this is the life!" But these ecstasies are always short-lived, and are often followed by cruel disillusionments and bitter chagrin. The only one in whose love and service this exclamation is always warranted, and never disappointed or regretted, is Jesus Christ, Who says of Himself: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live" (John, 11, 25). With reference to the worship of Jesus, then, everyone who loves Him may trustfully and joyously exclaim: Oh, this is the life! And what matters most, this exclamation will not be hushed in death, but the soul, delivered from the shackles of the body, meeting Jesus face to face, in all His sweetness and glory, will reiterate with boundless rapture, gratitude and bliss forever and ever: "O Jesus, Thou art the life!"

The Way of Earthly Heroes

When Napoleon the First was at the height of his glory, and had just achieved some of his greatest victories on the battlefield, he returned to Paris to celebrate his triumphs. The celebration took place in the most prominent public square of the beautiful city. Napoleon,

the man of destiny, the hero of the hour, was the center of the picture and the cynosure of all eyes. Along both sides of him were ranged the immortal generals who helped him win his battles. They, too, together with all the soldiers and civilians that filled the square were riveted with admiration for their leader. They seemed to be electrified by the gleam of genius that fell upon them from his fiery eyes.

A young man, a civilian, viewed this fascinating spectacle with unrestrained wonderment. He was seized as with a feeling of worship for Napoleon who to him at that moment seemed more like a god than like a man. He cried out in ecstatic frenzy: "Oh, what a wonderful being. I, too, want to fight for that invincible champion. I want some of his immortal glory to fall on me, too!"

Yet it was only a few short years, and Napoleon was shorn of all his glory and power. Conquered, broken and crushed, he was at the mercy of his bitterest enemies, as whose prisoner he eked out a pitiable existence on a lonely island in the sea until merciful death hastened to deliver him from his unspeakable misery. Napoleon on the island of St. Helena is an eloquent picture and a telling illustration of the usual course of worldly power and glory, and of the ordinary career of earthly heroes, conquerors and potentates.

"Draw Me"

The history of mankind registers and always will register but one outstanding and imposing figure: "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today: and the same forever" (Hebr., 13, 8). No young man or woman who cast their lot with Jesus Christ have ever had any reason to rue it, for: "Know ye, that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded" (Eccl., 2, 11). Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules.

In view of this abiding and overwhelming testimony of past and present history in favor of the irresistible divine charm of Jesus Christ, I hope that every Catholic young man and young lady, after reading this book, will cry out from the very depths of their souls unto Jesus, saying: "Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments. Show me, O Thou, Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest" (Cant., 1, 3, 6). "Now this is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent" (John, 17, 3).

And may we all: everyone of my readers, and I, too, acquit ourselves of our life's vocation in such a manner, thanks to the unfailing and abundant grace of God, that when the curtain rings down on our little play on the stage of life, we can say as Jesus said the last

night of His mortal life: "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now glorify Thou me, O Father, with Thyself" (John, 17, 4, 5).

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